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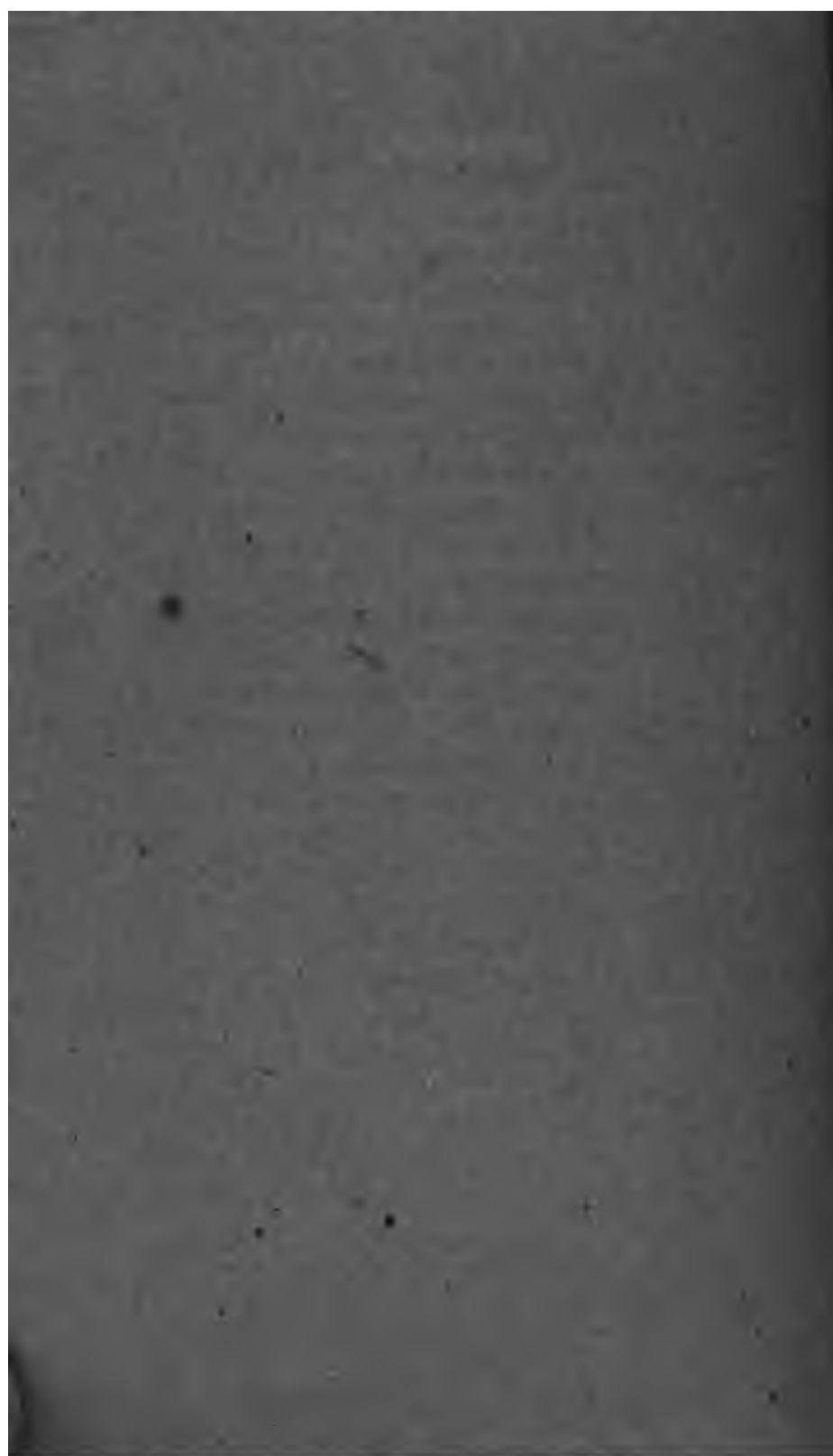


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IF I may be allowed to express my own opinion of the Play upon which the present Drama has been founded, I should say that it was not entitled to much success, nor yet to utter condemnation—but let that pass. I have endeavoured to profit by the animadversions of my critics ; and have expunged, condensed, and added, where I thought I could do so with effect.

I must here repeat my thanks to the Editor of the *Atlas*, for the generous zeal with which he sympathised in my former bad success.

I am much indebted to Mr. BROAD, the ready and indefatigable Acting Manager of the Victoria, for his attention to the getting up of the BEGGAR OF BETHNAL GREEN ; and to my staunch and zealous friend, Mr. FORSTER, of the Temple, I express my cordial acknowledgments for his critical revision of the play.

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THE
BEGGAR OF BETHNAL GREEN.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—ST. PAUL'S.

Enter BELMONT and WILFORD, disguised as Yeomen.

BELMONT.

Now, Wilford, still thy comrade when at school
Or college ; when 'twas peace, thy playfellow,
Thy right hand man in war ; I'm by thee still
In simple guise of honest yeoman's son,
To do the bidding of thy fantasy.
What is't?—Why are we thus attired?—What road
Are we to take ? on what adventure bound ?
The argument wilt thou unfold to me
Of this romance which thus we do begin ?
I see thy cheek is pale—thine eye without
The gladsome light that speaks a heart at rest.
Still to my questioning hast thou replied :—
“ Come, don a yeoman's coat and roam with me.”—

Thy wish is done—do mine; unbosom thee,
For 'till I find thy heart, I lack my own.

WILFORD.

Remember'st thou what once thou did'st rejoin,
When such, or such, if e'er I took a wife,
I said should be the fashion of my bride?—
'Twas this:—"In vain premise or calculate,
When thou shalt fall in love. A fever that!
Sudden as intermittent, or the plague,
That comes upon you! Love by rule, forsooth!
Love by philosophy! Thou shalt be smit
In the twinkling of an eye!—infected by
A touch!—this minute sound as mountain health,
And helpless next, as bedrid tenant of
An hospital."

BELMONT.

And hast thou prov'd it so?

WILFORD.

Attend. Last week I could not go the length
Of Ludgate Hill, but I must horse it thither.
Returning thence, a motley group of men,
Mechanics, servants, masters, old and young,
Collected round some object which they seemed
To gaze with most admiring wonder on,
Attracted me—what think you 'twas? A maid—
A maid attired in unpretending suit
Of humble russet!—such a distance wide
Remov'd from any child of luxury
Or wealth, not e'en a simple ribbon knot

To grace her coif and bonnet did expend
Its chary costliness ! but oh, what wealth
Had nature rain'd where fortune seem'd to grudge
The poorest drop of her enriching shower !
Sight could not take it in !—the tongue would stop
E'er it could sum it half—all terms out-run
That rate the value of known loveliness !
At thought of winning it, the heart grow wild,
As his whom more than very affluence
Doth lift from very want ! There stood the maid,
Silent and motionless, with eyes on ground,
Abash'd by the reflection of herself,
Cast back upon her so on every side
From mirrors that express'd her charms indeed,
By showing her their power.

BELMONT.

Remark'd she thee ?

WILFORD.

She did, my restless courser startled her ;
She rais'd her eyes, and lo ! they fix'd on mine
With look, methought, of recognition, that
I felt as though our very souls embraced,
And through me ran a thrill unknown before ;
When, spiteful chance ! my steed more restive grew,
Defied command alike of spur or rein,
And bore me from the maid.

BELMONT.

Ask'd you not who
She was ?

WILFORD.

No.

BELMONT.

No !

WILFORD.

As one in jeopardy
Will lack possession of himself, nor use
Some means of succour at his very hand,
I did not think of that, till out of reach on't !
My steed at length compelled—by whom I know not—
To check his mettle, I dismounted straight
And hasten'd back on foot, but she was gone !
If my first look of her hath been my last,
I'll never care to look on woman more !

BELMONT.

Thy lot is cast ! I told thee, Wilford, so !
To such conclusion ever comes his work
Who'd make philosophy the rule of love.
Love knows no rule, and never rule knows less
Than when obedience we'd exact from it.
'Tis an uncertain and a froward guest ;
Comes to us when it lists ; abides as long
As pleases it ; and its own humour takes,
Whatever may be ours ! You'd go in quest on't—
And lo ! 'tis with you before setting out ;
You'd lay down terms for its sojourning with you—
And here it is on its own terms at home ;
You'd fain be rid on 't, and 'tis fain to stay ;
You'd thrust it out of doors, and only find

The threshold's not your own, the moment love
Sets foot within it. Mean'st thou to seek this maid?

WILFORD.

Ay, through the world!

BELMONT.

I'll help thee in the search;
And if we find the city holds her not,
As far as Rumford bear me company—
Whither, this week, perforce I must repair—
And thence, where'er thou point'st, will I be thine.

WILFORD.

Come on! I tell thee, if I find her not,
I'm tenant for the house the sexton builds. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—A CHAMBER IN OLD SMALL'S.

Enter OLD SMALL.

OLD SMALL.

Who'd have a son—a plague—to drive him mad?
To hunt for, or to watch from morn till night,
To coax, to scold, and with no better thrift
To-day, than yesterday! A lackwit, caught
By this and that, and held by nothing. Now
At bowls; next hour at cocking; presently
A race, a show, a feast, and after that
Perchance a quarrel. Anything but work.
What Peter! Peter!

Enter PETER.

PETER.

Master, here am I.

OLD SMALL.

Well—my son, Peter?

PETER.

He's not to be found
In all Whitechapel, seek him where I would.
I call'd in at the Cock, he wasn't there;
The Fox and Geese, but came no better speed;
The Fountain was burn'd down last Tuesday night;
The Rising Sun has stopp'd since Lady-day;
The Crown and Mitre swore at me when last
I sought him there, so thither went I not;
The Duke of Buckingham and he are out
E'er since he broke the drunken tapster's pate;
And never goes he to the Loggerheads,
Except o' Sundays.

OLD SMALL.

Peter! Peter!

PETER.

Master?

OLD SMALL.

I sore mistrust thee, Peter.

PETER.

Master! me?

OLD SMALL.

Ay, by my troth, I do! mistrust thee sore!
Thou'rt in his secrets. I'll be sworn thou art.

I saw you wink to him on Sunday last,
At dinner time. Last Tuesday night, you said,
'Twas only ten when he came in ; and not
A minute from the bolting of the door,
The clock struck twelve ; I heard it ! Wednesday noon
You took a bundle in, and said 'twas from
'The laundress ; when I open'd it, and found
A spendthrift cloak and jerkin, spick and span
New from the tailor's board ; and, worse than that,
The whole of Thursday morning wast thou out ;
And when I asked thee where, thou could'st not tell !
Can'st tell me now ?

PETER.

I went an errand, sir,
To Barbican—an errand of mine own.

OLD SMALL.

An errand of thine own to Barbican !
How came I then to see thee at Mile-end ?

PETER

At Mile-end, sir ?

OLD SMALL.

At Mile-end, sir ! Thou runn'st
An errand well.

PETER.

You saw me at Mile-end ?

OLD SMALL.

When thou wast gone to Barbican ! well, sir ?

PETER.

From Barbican I went, sir, to Mile-end,
Not finding what I sought at Barbican.

OLD SMALL.

I have thee now, my piece of innocence !
My spice of honesty ! my serving man,
That runs so well on errands ! at Mile-end
I saw thee not, but saw thee at the foot
Of London Bridge !

PETER.

The foot of London Bridge ?

OLD SMALL.

Ay, Sir !

PETER.

And where should you have seen me else ?
When what I sought and miss'd at Barbican,
And missed again in seeking at Mile-end,
At London Bridge I found.

OLD SMALL.

O didst thou so ?
Would thou wast o'er the bridge ! thou jackanapes !
Wast thou not too at Hackney that same time ?
At Greenwich down, and Chelsea up, the Thames ?
At Kensington and Islington besides ?
The Tower, St. Paul's, and Westminster to boot ?
Didst thou not foot, from breakfast time till noon,
Ground that would take a man a week to ride ?
Thou knave of nimble toe, but nimbler tongue !
Varlet ! thou went'st not to Mile-end, nor yet
To foot of London Bridge, no more than I,
That never saw thee there ! I know not where
Thou went'st, but whither thou wilt go I'll tell—

To Tyburn, sirrah ! (*Knock*). Let thy master in !

[*Exit* PETER.]

His kennel never likes your chained dog,
And there are men like dogs, who loathe the thing,
Howe'er it profit them, to which you tie them ;
Who, like your dog, would forfeit house and mess
To break their chain, and forage for a bone.
What if I take the collar from his neck
And leave him, like the prodigal of old,
To his own will, till sad experience proves
That freedom is the bitterest mastery.
It shall be so. He cannot come to worse,
He may to better. I will do it straight.

Enter YOUNG SMALL AND PETER.

YOUNG SMALL.

Good morning, father.

OLD SMALL.

Morning, dog ! 'tis noon.

YOUNG SMALL.

Well then, good noon.

OLD SMALL.

Nor morning, noon, nor night,
Thou bring'st no good to me, so wish me none ;
Where hast thou been ?

YOUNG SMALL.

Hard by, at Master All-gain's.

OLD SMALL.

And what about ?

YOUNG SMALL.

Playing at loggats, Sir.

OLD SMALL.

At loggats? spendthrift! idler! Play at pence,
Shillings and pounds!

YOUNG SMALL.

I do what's next to that,—
Play for them, Sir.

OLD SMALL.

To lose them, cur; to lose them;
Hast thou not lost to-day?

YOUNG SMALL.

No, by my troth.
I'm winner, save a halfpenny, by a groat,
And should have doubled that, but for foul play.
But four we wanted, and the bowl was mine :—
There stood the loggats, sir, a glorious sight,
And only four to get! and here stood I—
There's not a lad in all Whitechapel, sir,
Is such a hand at loggats—here stood I,
With victory in hand, sure as the bowl
With which I thus took aim—a steady aim
Is half the game at loggats, sir—you'll mind
We wanted only four; the bowl was mine.
There stood the loggats; here stood I—they say
I have an air at loggats—thus I stand,
My left leg planted like a buttress, so—
My body pois'd upon the right, with knee
Bent neither more nor less;—I'd like you, sir,
To see me play at loggats—look, sir—

OLD SMALL.

Pshaw !

Come, throw the bowl, and make an end.

YOUNG SMALL.

And end

I should have made on't, had I thrown the bowl.

OLD SMALL.

What hindered thee ?

YOUNG SMALL.

A needle-full of thread !

A nail of tape ! a button mould ! a piece

Of list ! the vapour of a smoothing board !

Thus, as I said, I held the bowl—'twas all

But thrown. Ne'er out of cannon mouth look'd shot

More certain of its aim, than from my hand,

The bowl looked at the loggats. In a twink

Six of the nine at least were lying low.

" Stop ! " cries a snivelling tailor ; " Master Small,

'Tis not your turn to play"—the pair of sheers,

To clip me so, and thus cut up the game !

OLD SMALL.

Now mark me, Thomas Small ; thou'rt twenty-one :

What art thou master of ?

YOUNG SMALL.

Of quarter staff,

Rackets and fives.—I'm capital at fives !—

Hop but the ball, I'm sure to make it fly

Like bullet from a gun.—I play at bowls

And quoits.—At quoits I'm famous for a ringer !
And then I'll put the stone with any one.

OLD SMALL.

Master, thou art, I know, of idleness ;
But name to me the craft thou art master of.
Art fit to be a turner ?

YOUNG SMALL.

Burn the lathe !

OLD SMALL.

A cooper ?

YOUNG SMALL.

Sooner I'd be staved to death !

OLD SMALL.

A smith ?

YOUNG SMALL.

As 'lieve you'd hammer out my brains !

OLD SMALL.

A tailor ?

YOUNG SMALL.

Slay me with a needle first !

OLD SMALL.

What then art fit to be ?

YOUNG SMALL.

A gentleman.

OLD SMALL.

A gentleman ! Thou scarce canst read !

YOUNG SMALL.

What then ?

That's nothing in a gentleman.

OLD SMALL.

Thou writ'st—

But such a hand, the clerk's a cunning one
That makes it out.

YOUNG SMALL.

That's like a gentleman.

OLD SMALL.

Thou canst not cipher : hand thee in a bill
Of twenty items, and 'twill puzzle thee
To add it up.

YOUNG SMALL.

That's quite the gentleman.
Father, thou truly said'st I'm twenty-one,
And he that's twenty-one by law's a man :
So I'm a man, and as a man am free.
I'm master now of handsome twenty pounds,
Left to me by my godfather ; to them
Add thou what grace thy graciousness may please,
And in my own way let me try the world.

OLD SMALL.

Thou'rt like a wayward horse that will not break ;
The training thee's all labour, profit none,—
And thrift of fruitless toil's to give it up.
Thy will would have thee free before thine age ;
Thine age, like false friend, now doth back thy will ;
Both are too strong for me, and I must yield.
Wait for me. I'll be with you presently.

[*Exit* OLD SMALL.]

YOUNG SMALL.

Does he consent, and am I free indeed!
New bonds I fear'd to curb me in new rights,
And he takes off the old.—I thrive apace.
Most hopeful setting out! So fair begun
Must needs fair ending have.

PETER.

You play'd that game
Of loggats passing well.

YOUNG SMALL.

I play'd a game—
But not at loggats, Peter. Never more
I'll play at loggats! Peter, nought I've done
But walk since morning up and down Cheapside,
Feasting my eyes on ladies of the court
And its precincts, that come to bargain there.
O Peter, homely are the silks they wear
To their more silken looks! A city coif
Hath twice their pride! No tossing of the head;
No turning of the shoulder in disdain;
But eyes that drop when they your glances catch,
As if to let you gaze! Peter, I'll make
My fortune!

PETER.

Pri'thee, how?

YOUNG SMALL.

Now try and guess.

PETER.

I could not guess, where I to try a week.

YOUNG SMALL.

Peter, thou can'st be shrewd.—Look at me, Peter ;
Scan me from head to foot. Premising, now,
Thou knew'st me not, would'st take me for the son
Of Gilbert Small, the pin-maker ?

PETER.

More like
I'd take you for the son of Walter Husk,
The baker, to the east of Aldersgate.

YOUNG SMALL.

A baker's son ! a crust hath pith as much
As thou hast wit. Take me for son of him !

PETER.

He's tall, and so art thou.

YOUNG SMALL.

What's tall ?—What's tall ?
Pronounce me son unto a barber's pole,
For it is tall ! To say a man is tall
Is nothing, Peter ! Look at me again,
And guess what way I'll make my fortune. There,—
I fancy that's a leg.

PETER.

It is a leg.

YOUNG SMALL.

And thereunto's a foot.

PETER.

Yea is there, of
A verity.

YOUNG SMALL.

Go to ; you flatter now.

~~You~~ think me vain ; but I am not vain, although
I have a leg and foot,—ay, and a face
Moreover.

PETER.

Certainly thou hast a face.

He'd have a face who'd say thou had'st not one.

YOUNG SMALL.

Thou hast a wit, good Peter. Show thee but
A thing, thou see'st it.

Enter OLD SMALL unperceived.

Look at my waist.

Now lift your eye a little farther up,
And ponder how my shoulders spread. Dost see ?
Now on the whole—to speak it modestly—
Taking me altogether, am I not
A very personable man ? Now, Peter,
How shall I make my fortune ?—Why, you fool !
By love !

OLD SMALL (*coming forward*).

Who marries thee, loves not herself :
She goes a voyage in a fair-weather bark,
That scuds while wind and wave do favour it,
But in itself hath no sea-worthiness
To stand their buffeting ! Here, have thy wish ;
Thou'lt find no niggard hand has fill'd that purse.

I give it thee too feed thy wantonness ;
But, e'en for that, I'd have thee chary on't.
There's not a piece in it but is made up
Of grains of fractions, every one of which
Was slowly gathered by thy father's thrift,
And hoarded by his abstinence ! It holds
How many minutes torn from needful sleep !
How many customary wants denied !
How many throbs of doubting—sighs of care,
Laid out for nothing, in thy waywardness !
But take it with a blessing—Fare thee well !
Thou never yet could'st suit thee, Thomas, to
Thy father's house ; but, should there come the time,
Thou know'st the door, that still was open to thee.

[*Exit* OLD SMALL.]

YOUNG SMALL.

Peter, I'll stay at home. The good old man !
He loves me, Peter. Take him back the purse,
And say I'll stay at home.

PETER.

And keep at home ?
Wait like his leger on the desk ?

YOUNG SMALL.

I will !—
That is, I would.

PETER.

And follows, *if I could*.

YOUNG SMALL.

I fear it does.

PETER.

What's got, restored, may not be got again.

YOUNG SMALL.

Peter, you counsel like an oracle.

PETER.

You've rubb'd your eyes till they are red.

YOUNG SMALL.

Indeed ?

PETER.

Look in the glass.

YOUNG SMALL.

A pity not to make

My fortune, Peter ! Give me back my purse.

I'll make my fortune. Go and get my trunk,

And bring it after me to Cripplegate.

Thou said'st, as I came in, thy place was lost

On my account. I'll find thee in a new one.

[*Exit* PETER.]

There's no controlling fate ; and fate, I see,

By love has destin'd me to make my fortune.

So farewell to my father's house ! I could

Be sad at bidding it good-by—but will not.

I'll think on nought but how we'll meet again,

When love fulfils what fate decrees for me :

Bids Thomas Small a golden wedding hail,

And sends him home a very gentleman !

[*Exit* YOUNG SMALL.]

SCENE III.—AN APARTMENT IN ALBERT'S
HOUSE.

Enter ALBERT and EMMA.

EMMA.

WHY sigh'st thou, Albert?

ALBERT.

This hath troubled me.

On Thursday, said'st thou?

EMMA.

Yes.

ALBERT.

I recollect!

I recollect!—Was't not on Ludgate hill?

EMMA.

On Ludgate Hill.

ALBERT.

It was. I recollect

She grasp'd my arm, as with the start, methought,

Of sudden fear, which I accounted for,

As at the self-same moment heard I near

The furious prancing of a fiery steed!

Rode he a steed?

EMMA.

He did.

ALBERT.

Then 'twas for him!

The image, say'st thou, of my likeness—ere
That fatal field which robb'd me of my sight—
New given to thee?

EMMA.

So did she say.

ALBERT.

Where is
That likeness?

EMMA.

In her custody. 'Twas that
Betray'd to me the secret of her heart ;
She pray'd it from me. Of its costly case
Despoil'd, I gave it her—and wondered still
To find her gazing on't, with looks that spoke
A passion more than filial, that did vent
Itself in very tears ! the which her breast,
Unwonted heaving, seem'd with sighs to number !

ALBERT.

Such things I've heard.

EMMA.

What, Albert?

ALBERT.

I have heard
That subtle passion from a glance hath sprung.
Hath in a moment taken root so deep,
Years could not pluck it up ; but in the heart
It grew and grew, though beam of sunny hope
Did never fall upon it. Mark'd she how
He was attir'd?

EMMA.

A yeoman did he seem.

ALBERT.

That hope is quench'd :—of prouder state, this thing
That seems a weed, had haply prov'd a flower !

EMMA.

I prithee, Albert, how ?

ALBERT.

That brother, who,
Unnatural, my lands confiscate seized,
'Tis said is father to a goodly son,
The very image of his uncle dead,
As they believe me. Hope did kindle up,
That son it was she saw. That hope is quench'd !
He seem'd a yeoman ? For this malady
We have a medicine—the knowledge of
Our real state, which still we've hidden from her.
That she shall know to morrow.

EMMA.

Tell it her,
And quit this wayward life. Thou'st laid by store
Enough. Forsake the land which thee forsakes ;
Another one makes thee a franchis'd man,
Far from the ban of this. There may'st thou take
Thy title, in thy own land forfeited,
And for our fair child find befitting mate.

ALBERT.

I will not—cannot quit my native land !
Bann'd as I am, 'tis precious to me still.

It is my father's land—'tis lov'd for that ;
'Tis thine—thy child's—it should be lov'd for you ;
It should be lov'd, if only for itself !
'Tis free, it hath no despot, but its laws !
'Tis independent ; it can stand alone ;
Tis mighty 'gainst its enemies ; 'tis one !
Where can I find the land the like of it ?
Its son, though under ban and forfeiture,
Is envied. He's the brother of the free !
No ! No ! I cannot quit my native land.
For sight of other land I would not give
The feeling of its breath—the wall of him
That does not forfeit it, which none may scale,
However proud, unscath'd, to do him wrong !
I cannot—will not—quit my native land.

EMMA.

Then let us seek some quiet corner on't ;
Nor spend on thriftless hope, what, husbanded
By wise content, would keep us more than rich.

ALBERT.

Nor can I that. Who sees his house pull'd down,
And does not strive to build it up again ?
Who sees his vessel sunk, and does not look
For other hull to plough the waves anew ?
I cannot do't ! I've liv'd on the high seas
Of restless life ; I would be on them still.
Say I'm unfit for't—I'd be near them still.
The sailor, maimed or superannuate,
Seeks not an inland home ; but near some cliff

His hammock slings, in hearing of the surge
He wont to cleave of yore. Come, lead me forth.
Where's Bess?

EMMA.

An errand gone to Aldersgate.

ALBERT.

I would again she went not forth alone ;
My heart hath strange misgivings touching her.
Bold men infest our streets, who would not stop,
By might to take what right refuses them ;
Like him who late, with his pernicious suit,
Did hurt her tender ear.

STRAP (*without*).

What! ho!

ALBERT.

Come in,
Whose challenge is unwelcome, yet a friend's.
Is it not honest Master Strap?

Enter STRAP.

STRAP.

The same,
Master of cobbling, as thy shoes do show,
Which seek his lapstone old, and leave it new—
But to the matter, as they say?

ALBERT.

What is't?

STRAP.

Why, this it is—a truth as old as time—

Grief hath this soother, 'tis not solitary,
But, if 'twill look for't, finds its fellow grief.
So does the wise man teach. 'Thou know'st I lost
My daughter, Sunday week ; she did not die :
Romances drove the giddy vixen mad,
And she eloped from me. For loss of her
I have ne'er been sober since ! No comforter
Like ale—save sack ; but sack's for rich men's cares.
—Your friends ! —Says one, “ It might have fallen out
worse ; ”

One, that it might be evil, sent for good ;
One, that the plague itself will have an end ;
And some did pity ; some'did scold ; and some
Did try to laugh me out of sorrowing.
As twenty ways there were to mend a shoe
Besides the soling, heeling, welting on't.

ALBERT.

But what is this to us ?

STRAP.

Philosophy !
If not philosophy, a moral, then—
And if not that, why, then, a hint that thou
Hast lost thy daughter, just as I have mine.

EMMA.

Have lost our daughter !

STRAP.

With a difference, though—

ALBERT.

Nay—

EMMA.

Prithee, Albert, give him his own way ;
He's sure at last to take it ; so we lose
Our time, persuading him to progress ours.
Well.

STRAP.

I did say there was a difference,
But what of that ? This road and that do meet—
Take which you will, you come to the same end.
It matters not, my daughter, with her will,
Thine against her's, is gone, since both alike
Are lost.

ALBERT.

How ? where ? who forc'd our child away ?

STRAP.

A gallant, who behemm'd her in the street,
With good a score of lusty followers,
Flush'd swaggerers, that seem'd of no account
To reckon lawless deeds ! I heard a rout
And left my stall. There was she in the midst,
Some following with outcry 'gainst the deed—
But none with hand that dar'd to question it.
Upon my child I thought, at sight of thine—
Thought of thy loss mine own brought home to me—
My brain was swimming, and I rush'd on him
That held her—but a fillip laid me down !
Yet, brief as was the scuffle, and the end
Untoward, profit came of it. This ring
He wore, though how he left it in my hand
I know not.

ALBERT.

Give it me !—A jewel hath it !
Yes ! 'Tis no common ring. Perhaps a clue
To trace the ravisher ! Give me a sword,
Get me a knife—a dagger !—any thing,
So that it be a weapon ! Wretched man !
Why don't I ask you first to get me eyes !
Sight of my heavy wrong, put out the thought
Of what must help me to revenge my wrong !
Oh, heavy loss ! To have a father's heart—
To have a father's arm to second it,—
And both be useless for the lack of sight !
The Queen ! The Queen !

STRAP.

Would'st see the Queen ? Then straight
Repair to Temple Bar ; she doth commence
To day a Royal progress ; there will wait
To hear the greeting of the mayor and citizens.

ALBERT.

Lead on ! My child ! my child ! Whate'er betide,
This hour will I unfold myself, and find,
One way or other, period to my cares.
Know'st thou where dwells a notary on the way ?
Conduct me to him.—On !—We'll meet our death
Or find our child.—On ! On ! Our child ! Our child !

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV.—TEMPLE BAR.

The houses on each side adorned with cloths of silk or velvet, gold or silver, hanging from the upper windows.—A crowd of Citizens, men and women, assembled.

OFFICER.

STAND back, sirs! stand back there, I say!—Why press ye forward?—Back there! back! Keep order till her highness pass.

FIRST CITIZEN.

Will it be long, sir, ere she come?

OFFICER.

To answer that I must know the measure of your patience. Stretches it to some five minutes hence, I dare warrant you she will be here quickly; for 'tis a quarter and upwards beyond the time she appointed to set out from Westminster.

SECOND CITIZEN.

Is't to Norwich, sir, her highness makes her progress this time? (*Shouts without*).

OFFICER.

To Norwich 'tis, sir.—Peace! her highness comes. Each keep his place, nor press upon the other, so one and all will see the sight. Here comes the lord mayor, with the aldermen and council, to greet her highness. More room!—stand back! stand back!

Enter the LORD MAYOR, &c. Enter procession through the gates ; Soldiers, Gentlemen Pensioners, band of Gentlemen, band of Knights, band of Barons, Trumpeters and Heralds. The QUEEN, accompanied by Ladies, closed up with Guards.—The LORD MAYOR, &c., advance and kneel to the QUEEN.

MAYOR.

May't please your Majesty, with duteous knees,
That for our loving and right loyal hearts
Do truly vouch, as would our tongues for both ;
Our happy privileges, of the which
Your gracious sceptre the high guardian is,
Thus lowly at your highness' feet we lay ;
And with fair greeting, pray to welcome you
To your good city here of London.

QUEEN.

Freely
Do we accept your greeting, citizens.
Of London ; of our loyal cities, chief ;
The princess fair of commerce, that defies
The world to show her peer ; whose merchantmen
Do throng the seas with gallant fleets, the which
To float, the treasures of kings might brag !
The privileges, at our feet you lay,
We pray you to resume : and truly guard
For her behoof, who, in her subjects weal,
Doth love to boast she still locks up her own.

MAYOR.

Our duties ever on your highness wait !

QUEEN.

Proceed.

ALBERT (*without*).

The Queen ! the Queen !—Where !—

Where's the Queen ?

OFFICER.

Stand back !

QUEEN.

Make way !—Who calls upon the Queen ?

OFFICER.

So please your Majesty, a beggar man !

Stand back !

ALBERT.

The Queen ! the Queen !

OFFICER.

Stand back, I say !

QUEEN.

Hold, sirrah ! Dare not stop my subjects' way
That come in suffering to me ! Did I—when
My right did crown me, and I pass'd along,
My way beset with subjects, that more thick
Did throng me with their blessings than their eyes—
My chariot frequent stay, that I might take
Their gifts of nosegays from poor women's hands,
And shall I now pass on, nor stop to hear
A poor man's prayer ! Approach, whate'er thou art !

(*The Officer makes way for ALBERT, who enters*).

ALBERT (*presenting a scroll*).

Lead—lead me to her highness' feet! (*Kneels*).
Justice, great Queen!—Justice and mercy!

QUEEN.

How!

Mercy doth stay the hand of justice; justice
Prevent the hand of mercy.—Ask'st thou, then,
For both?

ALBERT.

For mercy I'd implore for one,
Whose high offence hath long contrition half
Atoned for,—half, the loss of sight—his just
And heavy penalty for swerving duty!
Justice I'd ask on one, whose daring wrong,
In open day, hath robb'd me of my child—
A virgin, gracious Queen, of beauty rare,
Although her father's eyes ne'er vouch'd for it!

QUEEN.

But went she of her will?

ALBERT.

No! no!—by force
Just now!—i' th' public street! in open day!
Torn from her parents, whither know they not—
A mother that in him, who should protect
Her child and her, doth only find a charge!
A father, with the limb and heart of one,
Still without eyes is heartless—lopp'd of limb—
At least to succour those that cleave to him!

O royal maiden, take a maiden's part,
And, for her wrong, o'erlook the wrong might stand
Betwixt thy justice and her injury ! .

QUEEN.

Thy tears, old man, do better serve than sparks,
To kindle up our wrath ! Know'st thou the name
Of the offender ?

ALBERT.

No.

QUEEN.

Nor rank ?

ALBERT.

Nor rank—
Unless a ring—which, in a scuffle that
Befel with one who tried to take her part,
Came from the finger of the ravisher—
Serve as a clue to find him.

QUEEN.

Show it us !
This ring is not a stranger to us ! Ha !
Waits in our train Lord Thomas Willoughby ?

LORD WOODVILLE.

No, gracious mistress.

QUEEN.

Read this document ; (*gives Albert's scroll*)
Advise him straight of its contents ; and add
Command that on receipt, with prompt despatch,
He lead the beggar's daughter to our feet—
His wedded bride !

What to thyself alone relates, we'll at
Our leisure learn ; what to thy child, at once
We'll give our care to. Instruct us by what name
Thou now art known, or title ?

ALBERT.

The Blind Beggar
Of Bethnal Green.

QUEEN.

Thy daughter's name ?

ALBERT.

'Tis Bess.

QUEEN.

Our own !—Of beauty rare thou say'st ?

ALBERT.

Most rare !

QUEEN.

And good ?

ALBERT.

Most good.

QUEEN (*to Attendant*).

Look to that sightless man ! Whither we go,
Our pleasure 'tis he waits upon us. On !
The glory it shall be of Bess's reign
Her lowest subject, if his cause is right,
Hath 'gainst her highest odds ; for, beggar e'en,
He still shall have his Queen to side with him !

[*Exeunt.*]

Enter YOUNG SMALL and PETER, newly attired.

YOUNG SMALL.

Plague on it, Peter, we're too late, you see !
Had we o'erta'en them while they parley'd here,
An easy matter had it been for me
To mingle with the train, and walk along,
As one of them. To follow them is all
That's left me now. So ! let's take breath awhile.
Peter, thou'lt ruin me ! Is that a way
For serving-man to carry him ?—Consider—
Thy master, Peter, is a gentleman.

PETER.

To keep in mind on't do I all I can.

YOUNG SMALL.

I say thou dost not, else would it appear.

PETER.

It shall appear.

YOUNG SMALL.

See that it do so then—
Especially when thou dost go abroad.
Then carry thus thy head, stand with an air ;
Walk with a gait, as thou wast somebody ;
And when thou speak'st, thou must speak up, like one
That values not who hears ;—but not to me.
To me, good Peter, do thou none of these !
Speak small to me ; wear thus thy head to me ;
Stand thou not with an air when I am by ;
Nor, when my eye's upon thee, move with gait
Of somebody ! Thou'rt ever nobody

In presence of thy master !—minding still
To bear thee like a gentle serving-man.

PETER.

I'll mind.

YOUNG SMALL.

And do so !—And remember too
When I do sit, and thou dost wait on me,
Thou layest not thy hand upon my chair.
But stand at distance from't—nor yet in line,
But good a foot behind the rearmost leg ;
Not in advance of that a barley-corn !
And balance not thy body on one leg,
With knee of t'other negligently bent,
As if it said “ I care not ! ” 'Tis not meet.
But stand on both, as every joint of thee
Did know me for thy master—not astride,
But heel to heel !—And keep thy finger from
Thy button-hole—but not to cram it in
Thy poke ! Nor yet on hip to rest it—'twere
As thou wouldst say, “ I think myself a lord ! ”
Thou wouldst not fold thine arms ! Field-martial, Peter,
Could do no more—do nothing with thine arms,
But let them hang ! There ! Seem'st thou now indeed
A serving-man.

PETER.

Will that content you ?

YOUNG SMALL.

Yes.

But mark ! Thou hast play'd with me at coits and loggats,
No more of that !

PETER.

I'll mind.

YOUNG SMALL.

And when I have order'd me a tankard out,
And given it thee to hold, thou more than once
Hast quaff'd it off to my good luck.—Be sure
No more of that !

PETER.

I'll try and mind. But, sir—
Since so I must accost thee—what avail
The gait and air of gentle serving-man,
Without the pocket should belong to one ?
Look there !

YOUNG SMALL.

What's there ?

PETER.

A melancholy rap !
A black-faced copper sixpence ! Add to which
A button without shank, and you sum up
The pocket of your gentle serving-man !
I ne'er can do without allowances.

YOUNG SMALL.

Allowances !—What wages got you from
My father, Peter ?

PETER.

'Twere a cunning clerk
Could count them,—purse was never made would wear
With hoarding them. To coin them took it not
Gold, silver, no nor brass. I served him for

In presence of thy master!—minding still
T'o bear thee like a gentle serving-man.

PETER.

I'll mind.

YOUNG SMALL.

And do so!—And remember too
When I do sit, and thou dost wait on me,
Thou layest not thy hand upon my chair.
But stand at distance from't—nor yet in line,
But good a foot behind the rearmost leg;
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And balance not thy body on one leg,
With knee of t'other negligently bent,
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Thy button-hole—but not to cram it in
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PETER.

'Twere a cunning clerk
Could count them,—purse was never made would wear
With hoarding them. To coin them took it not
Gold, silver, no nor brass. I served him for

My bed and board, that board and bed were none,
But shifts for them ; a jerkin in the year
And doublet ; old apparel new made up ;
Hose, when the feet had walk'd away from them ;
Shoes, whose last mending had the cobbler brought
To his last wits ; and hat that gaped to see
Its crown was gone ; with what good luck besides
Might send me.

YOUNG SMALL.

And thou nam'st allowances !
Do I not promise thee a pound a-year ?
Jerkin and doublet to provide thee with,
The thirtieth penny on the counter rung
The knell of half-a-crown ! Hose I got thee,
With feet unto them, newly vamp'd and darn'd !
And from the cordiner himself direct
Was thou not shod ? Nor was thy head forgot.
With thy well-furnish'd trunk to make it match,
Did I not treat it to a crown-whole hat,
Nor yet at outlay stopp'd, so ruinous,
But in the hat a comely feather stuck,
At charge of twice a groat ? No more of this !
Believe when thou'rt well off.—There's twopence for thee,
To show thee that thou serv'st a gentleman !
Dream'st thou sometimes ?

PETER.

I do.

YOUNG SMALL.

What's the best dream
A man can dream ?

PETER.

They say 'tis hanging.

YOUNG SMALL.

So !

Didst thou not dream of hanging yesternight ?

PETER.

I did.

YOUNG SMALL.

Thy dream's come out ! Thy fortune's made

But knew'st thou it—come on ! Content thee, and

Thou shalt have pence ! Mind how thou bear'st thyself !

Well done ! But keep to that ! So.—Follow me.

[Exeunt.]

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE I.—THE QUEEN'S ARMS.

Enter Hostess and RALPH.

HOSTESS.

Now have I told thee all—how she came here
On Tuesday night, sore faint and travel-worn,
When thou at Epping wast upon the roam ;
How from her home by bold and lawless men
She had been forced ; how she escaped their hands ;
How, when she reach'd her parents' roof again,
Deserted 'twas,—its tenants doubtless gone
In quest of her ; how, knowing not what way
To go, she put her trust in heaven to guide her,
Which brought her to our door !

RALPH.

Inform'd she thee
Who were her parents ?

HOSTESS.

No ; I ask'd, but saw
The question troubled her, so ask'd no more.
I see thou think'st her fair. Now, mark me, Ralph.
Thou'rt less sedate, I know, than thou art wild,—
I also think there's in thy heart a check

Of ruth and honesty, that draws thee back
When passion cross their bounds would have thee wing.
Thou hast a shrewd conception, too, of life
Beyond thy station and thy years, my son ;
Beware then, Ralph, her beauty tempt thee not
To do her wrong ! She's poor. She has not friend
Of right she here can call so—has not home,
Save what a stranger's roof supplies her with ;
The labour of her hands is all her means ;
Her virtue is their strength ; who'd rob them on't
Were he my son, he were not villain only,
But coward mean to boot.

RALPH.

Nay, mother, nay,
I'm not that lackgrace yet ! Give thou consent,
I'm wived to-morrow for sweet Bessy's sake.

HOSTESS.

I'll think on't, Ralph ; meantime bestir thee, son ;
Look to the gentleman, since Wednesday last
Took up his quarters here.

RALPH.

The gentleman ?
My shoe's a gentleman !

HOSTESS.

How, sirrah ! this
Thy manners ?

RALPH.

Mother, I did overhear——

HOSTESS.

Didst what? I'll have no list'ners in my house,
No eaves-droppers! no ears that wait on key-holes!
Who take their quarters up at the Queen's Arms,
Shall have their secrets, as their luggage, safe!
Fie on thee, Ralph, no more on't! mind thyself!
Thy mother's hard-earned gains not more were won
By thrift than honesty; whom they enrich
Must honest be as thrifty. So be thou.
My son is he, not of my blood that's drop,
But portion of my heart.—Not so—I'd take
A hind that is, to be thy mother's heir. [*Exit RALPH.*
All's right and tidy,—each thing in its place,
And cleverly put out of hand. No cup,
Tankard, or flagon, but its face might show
To polished silver, rich and bright as 'tis.
There's sure a virtue in her touch, that leaves
All things it meets as ne'er they look'd before!
Luck hath she brought with her. Since here she came,
No house in Rumford holds its head so high
As the Queen's Arms, for balm of sparkling ale,
Cordial of sack, and nectar of bright wine!
Would she were wife to Ralph! We cannot hope
To keep the treasure long that's coveted
By all who see it, and by right's not ours;
But yet who is she?—Ralph's my son, and heir
To good a hundred pounds a-year, besides
His father's house and land. Her courtesy might
An heiress' self vouchsafe to make to Ralph.

When he should wed, I ever look'd, at least,
To give my blessing to some doctor's, squire's,
Or curate's daughter. Wed him shall I to
One knows not whom?—I'll question her more close.
His father, when he wived, took home his match,
And so must he. She comes. (*Bess sings without.*)

No need to keep
Blackbird or thrush, while she is in the house,
So sweet and active is her pretty throat.
What's that she looks thus constant at, when'er
She thinks herself alone; but when observed
Doth ever quickly nestle in her breast?

*Enter BESS with her father's picture, which she
frequently examines while she sings.*

The blind man's at the door,
And won't you let him in?
He plays the harp, he'll spare no pains,
Your favour for to win.
He'll sing you fits, one, two, or three,
And he'll ask you a groat—no more;
And, grudge you a groat, he'll be thankful for less—
The blind man's at the door.

He'll sing you stories sad,
He'll sing you stories gay;
And call as often as you please,
He will not say you nay.
If you fill him a cup, he's a happy blind man,
As oft he has been before;
But, grudge you that grace, he's contented with none—
The blind man's at the door.

The blind man's at the door,
And shelter none has he ;
The sky doth smile, or it doth frown,
But which he cannot see!
If you welcome him in, what cares he for the sky ?
It may shine, or it may pour ;
But, grudge you that grace, wet or dry he must on !—
The blind man's at the door.

(At the conclusion of the song the HOSTESS approaches and steals a look at the picture).

HOSTESS.

Whose picture's that, my Bess ?

BESS.

My father's.

HOSTESS.

Then
Was never father better loved than thine !
Nay, blush not, that thou lov'st thy father well !
Show't me. He is a father to be loved !
No wonder thou shouldst keep it next thy heart ;
I well could take't to me. Thou blushest more
And more. Thou silly wench ! There, put it up.
I like to hear thee sing, my pretty Bess ;
'Tis gladness to my heart ! Art happy, Bess,
To live with me ?

BESS

As far as happiness
Can live with Bess,—her parents lost—herself
Unable to provide her home or friend.

HOSTESS.

Not so, my pretty Bess ! Herself can best
Provide her these. No customer that comes
To the Queen's Arms, and hath unmistress'd house,
But would be glad if Bess its mistress were—
Knew he her history.

BESS (*aside*).

Her history !

HOSTESS.

One likes to know
Whence people come—who people are—their birth
And parentage. Wast thou a lady born,
I could not love thee better than I do.
But loving thee so well, I'd know who 'tis
So well I love. Who art thou, pretty Bess ?

BESS (*aside*).

If I do say I am a beggar's child,
The door that took me in may thrust me out !
If aught beside, I speak what is not truth,
And that I'll never speak !—You think me good :
You find me willing—useful in the house—
Not knowing who I am. To teach you that
More good, more willing, useful, makes me not ;
Then do not seek to know't. I dare be bound,
If cause I give you not for more content,
I'll give you none for less.

HOSTESS.

Where mystery is
Doubt is. We hide what we do fear to show.

If I do come of honest kind, care I
Who knows my father's name? I'd cry it from
The steeple top! To be a friend, we needs
Must find a friend. My friend is she alone
That trusts me. If my love's not worth as much,
Better I keep it to myself. Fair brow
Thou hast, and open too! I ween thy heart's
As fair—but why is't not as open, Bess?—
Why, whither goest thou?

BESS.

*(Who while the hostess has been speaking has
put on her cloak and bonnet.)*

I know not—but
I know I must go hence! You're right—'tis fit
One know whom they do lodge—whom they do love;
'Tis little to ask that! Alas for them
That are not masters of so small a boon!
They may be question'd—wonder were they not.
They may be doubted—they cannot complain.
They may lack friend—they've but themselves to blame.
Farewell—thanks! thanks! much thanks!—'Twas all a
gift!

The wind and rain, on which you shut the door
That let me in, had just as much a right
To enter it as I. I am rested now,
Refreshed, and strengthened—every foot I go
I'll bless you that I am so!

HOSTESS.

Leave me, Bess!

That shalt thou never ! Give me off thy cloak !
Prevent me not !—thy bonnet I'll untie,
Or never more may I tie on my own !
Ah ! Bess, dost mind me ? Care I who thou art ?
Or doubt I thee ? or am I not thy friend ?
Nay, if thou leav'st the house, I leave it too !
I'll have no house that does not roof thy head !
For ever live with me ! (*Embraces her*). Want'st thou
a right ?
A right then shalt thou have. Ralph loves thee, Bess,—
Whoe'er thou art, thou shalt be wife to Ralph !
Nay, answer not ! I say I'll have it so !
See if I love thee now ! Here's company—
I'll look to them. Go dry thine eyes, sweet Bess !
Thou shalt be daughter, wife, and all, my Bess.

[*Exeunt severally.*]

SCENE II.—A PRIVATE ROOM IN THE
QUEEN'S ARMS.

Enter RALPH.

RALPH.

Look to thy birthright, Ralph ;—avails it not
To be thy mother's son that nature made,
Thou must be offspring of her humour too !
Is't fault of thine that thou art not a wall ?
That thou dost hear, when men before thee tell
Their loose-kept secrets ? Gentlemen, forsooth !
My gentleman's gentleman ! the scrub of him !
The helper o' the scrub ! a rap, was nailed

To some vile counter, has been taken thence,
And the base metal coin'd anew, to pass
For piece of honest gold ! 'T won't pass with me !
He trusts to make his fortune by the priest—
Of some rich dame the favour sweet to win—
And thereunto he follows the Queen's court ;
But stopping, on his way, at Rumford, here
Sets eye upon the linnet I would lime,
And tarries at our house. But, lest he spoil
My sport, I've pointed out the bush to him
Where sits a goldfinch—but a painted one—
Our Kate, that's vow'd to wed a gentleman—
Our chambermaid, to seek her fortune, come
Like him to Rumford, and alighted here.
Her do I palm on him for noble maid,
Heiress of gold and lands, from forced match
Escap'd, and crouching here in humble guise
To shun pursuit.—Ha ! here she comes !— Good day.

Enter KATE.

Sweet Kate !

KATE.

Hold off ! I'm Kate too sweet for thee !

RALPH.

Indeed ! when do we call thee wife, sweet Kate ?

KATE.

When thou hold'st stirrup to my husband !

RALPH.

How !

Will nothing less content thee ? Marry, Kate
Marry thy match, or count to die a maid.

KATE.

My match is he that fits my thought, not thine.

RALPH.

Thy match is he that fits thy fortune, Kate.

KATE.

Not so, when I my fortune am above.

RALPH.

Their fortune who're above, oft fall below.

KATE.

Leave me to look to that. •

RALPH.

Look to it, then.

Thy new year's gift I'll double for thee, Kate,

If ere the year comes round, thou curtsey not

The wife of honest hind.

KATE.

The hind I'll wed

Thou'lt touch thy bonnet to.

RALPH.

Ay, shall I, Kate,

When he to me doffs his.

KATE.

Doffs his to thee !

He first shall doff his head !

RALPH.

Nay, Kate, be friends !

Not only do I wish thee well to wed,

But, if I could, would help thee, pretty Kate ;

And I can help thee if thou'rt in the mood.

KATE.

What ! in the mood to help thee to a jest ?

RALPH.

Thyself be judge ! The gentleman, came here
On Wednesday,—he throws glances at thee, Kate—
Is that a jest ? I've heard, thy cousin, Kate,
Was cousin's cousin to the cousin of
An earl, sweet Kate—I've told him so. Is that
A jest ? Thou know'st how windfalls come—how men,
Were ragged knaves one day, the next has seen
To strut as robed lords—how oft the tree
Of noble family hath wither'd, branch
By branch, till, none to bear its honours left,
They're gone to cover some poor distant graft,
The parent stock ne'er threw its shadow on !
Why may't not hap to thee ?—I think it may—
I wish it may—and as 'tis easy, Kate,
To fancy what we wish, I've told him, Kate,
To titles and revenues thou art heir !
Is that a jest ? Let but thy bearing back
My giving out, I'd marvel not if ere
A quarter of a year—a month—a week,
I doff my bonnet to thy spouse indeed.
Is that a jest ?

KATE.

Ralph, thou'rt an honest lad !

RALPH.

When thou repair'st to church, may I, sweet Kate,
Make bold to kiss thee when the knotting's done ?

KATE.

I shall not mind, for old acquaintance, Ralph.

RALPH.

And when thou'rt married, may I sometimes call?

KATE.

Ay, may'st thou, Ralph.

RALPH.

How often?—Once a year?

KATE.

I'll not be angry, Ralph, if it be twice.

RALPH.

How kind thou art!—and when I call, sweet Kate,
Wilt bid the lackey ask me in?

KATE.

I will.

RALPH.

And order master Ralph a cup of sack,
To drink thy health, while in the hall he stands?

KATE.

As sure as I shall be a lady, Ralph.

RALPH.

Thou shalt be married to a gentleman!
And here he comes—observe him, bonny Kate,
The visage, figure, habit, air, and walk
Of gentleman! To note his only gait
A man would say, or he lack'd brains, there goes
At least a handsome thousand pounds a year!
When thou shalt call him spouse! Away, my Kate.
Don thou a smother 'kerchief—change thy cap

E

For thy Sunday one, with bows as broad and red
As full-blown peonies ! and soon as done
Come back again, when thou shalt find him here,
And troll that pretty song you sang to us
On Tuesday night—as though you mark'd him not.
Love in his heart be sure hath taken root—
See how I'll make it grow and come to fruit !
Bear thee as lofty gentlewoman, Kate ;
Go proudly, Kate, and not as chambermaid !
Of maids thou shalt be mistress !—Well done, Kate !

[*Exit KATE.*]

Here comes indeed, my gentleman, from top
To toe new-furnish'd, as on conquest bent.

[*Retires up stage.*]

Enter YOUNG SMALL.

YOUNG SMALL.

Debate it thus. What's love ? It is not land
Or gold ; 'tis not attire or tenement ;
Or meat or drink. What is the worth on't then ?
Nothing ! it makes not wise—for these are things
That wise men covet, and 'twould counsel me
To part with them ; it makes not great—great men
Hath love undone : 'Tis not content—I ne'er
Saw lover yet but he was woe-begone !
Its signs are willows, darts, and bleeding hearts !
I'll none on't, I'm resolved ! Sweet mistress Bess !

RALPH.

Sweet mistress Kate thou mean'st.

YOUNG SMALL.

Right, master Ralph.

Yet mistress Bess is sweet ! But what of that ?

'Tis fit a gentleman a lady wed—

So Kate's the maid for me. I'll conquer love !—

Love's no small thing to conquer. Men fall sick

For love, go mad for love ; hang, drown themselves—

But love doth meet its match when it meets me !

You see I'm ready, Ralph.

RALPH.

I see you are.

Ay, that's the way to go a-wooing.

YOUNG SMALL.

What,

It strikes you ?

RALPH.

Yes !

YOUNG SMALL.

The jerkin's a new cut,

Or else the tailor's perjur'd—oath he took

It should be made as never jerkin was !

RALPH.

His oath he has kept !

YOUNG SMALL.

You mark my doublet too ?

RALPH.

Else lack'd I eyes.

YOUNG SMALL.

And how the sleeves are slash'd ?

RALPH.

'Tis slashing work indeed ! She must have heart
Of stone, gives she not.

YOUNG SMALL.

A fine effect !

And then my hat—what think you of the set ?

RALPH.

A gallant set—a very gallant set,
Most valiantly turned up.

YOUNG SMALL.

The feather red !

Blood red ! and nearly of a rapier's length ;
The loop of warlike steel, that, what with loop
Feather and set, methinks it is a hat
Cries—" Touch me not."

RALPH.

Methinks it is.

YOUNG SMALL.

'Twas made
To special order.

RALPH.

So 'twould seem.

YOUNG SMALL.

You know

They like a gallant bearing. I would look
A very Hector, when I go to woo !

RALPH.

And thou hast hit it.

YOUNG SMALL.

On your honour, now ?

RALPH.

Else never man hit any thing.

YOUNG SMALL.

Indeed !

I thank you, master Ralph. I'm glad you're pleas'd.

You have a taste ! Beshrew me but you have !

How would you have me wear my rapier ?—So ?

Or so ?

RALPH.

Who, so—it better shows the hilt.

YOUNG SMALL.

A pretty hilt ! I bought it for the hilt.

The cutler would have palm'd upon me one

Of better blade ! He thought he had a fool

To deal with ! Buy a rapier for the blade !

Who shows the blade ?

RALPH.

Most true.

YOUNG SMALL.

I think I'll do.

RALPH.

No doubt on't—Here she comes, sir—That's her voice.

Did'st ever hear her sing, sir ?—

(KATE *sings without.*)

YOUNG SMALL.

Never.

RALPH.

No !

Then never did you hear a nightingale.

Apart awhile, sir—you shall hear her voice.

Enter KATE, and sings.

What shall I give to win your heart,
My pretty chambermaid?
What shall I give to win your heart?
I've land, I've gold, with aught I'll part
To make you mine, he said.

The maid, kind sir, whose heart is sold,
A well-a-day may sing!
The maid, kind sir, whose heart is sold,
Sells more than worth of land or gold,
Unless a golden ring!

Say aught but that, my bonny queen,
And thou'rt my own, he said.
Say aught but that, my bonny queen,
Who gives not that, she said, is e'en
Beneath a chambermaid!

Take that, take that, and all beside,
Be mine, be mine, he said!
Take that, take that, and all beside,
She's worth me, that must be my bride,
Though but a chambermaid!

RALPH.

Up to her, sir—yet hold! I'll whisper her
A word shall profit thee; your gentle blood
Is skittish, sir, and mettlesome—behoves
You tenderly lay hand upon it, sir;
'Tis quick of instinct too, to know its kind.
Was ever balance pois'd by thee or thine,
Yard flourish'd, counter brush'd, or leger scrawled,
'Tis odds she'll apprehend it in a trice.
Thank heaven, thou art indeed a gentleman.

YOUNG SMALL (*aside*).]

I'd thank it, never had I pass'd for one.
A score of crowns for my own clothes again !
'Sdeath, should she find I wear another man's—
The thought doth set my heart a thumping. On
My forehead do I feel the moisture break—
My knees begin to knock—oh, Thomas Small !
Better thou had'st remained thy father's dog
Than ta'en a roam to Rumford.

RALPH.

Kate, behoves
Thou bear thyself as lofty gentlewoman.
If he looks ten feet high, do thou look twenty ;
When he accosts thee, eye him up and down,
And down and up again, from head to foot ;
He verily believes thou art a lady,
Keep him to that—thy arms a kimbo put—
Walk to and fro, and toss thy pretty head !
Behoves fine ladies give themselves fine airs,
Or who would know them fine—(*To YOUNG SMALL.*)
Up to her now.

YOUNG SMALL.

Fair Kate, a word or two. I'd speak to thee.

KATE.

(*Following RALPH's direction.*) Sir !

(*YOUNG SMALL starts back, KATE
walks about as instructed.*)

RALPH.

'Sdeath ! stick up to her, or, as I live,
You'll lose her, sir. Set thou to work as well,

Pace to and fro, a yard at every step—
Great men, I have remarked, take mighty strides—
Thats right ! she stops—now to the charge again ;
Tell her thou hast a guess of her estate ;
'Twill soften her—but mind thou nothing bate
The feeling of thine own, as right thou should'st not ;
That art indeed a very gentleman.

YOUNG SMALL.

A cunning man who feels the thing that is not !
Marry, I have found a secret out. 'Tis not
The clothes that make a man a gentleman.
Odzooks ! she traversed me from top to toe,
As she would lay me open with her eye.
I vow I feel as I were like to swoon—
O Little Cheap—snug Little Cheap ! as much,
As once I wished me out of thee, I now
Do wish me back again !

RALPH.

Now, pretty Kate,
We'll draw to calm—thou hast convinc'd him quite.
He swears thou art a gentlewoman born.
Put off a cloud or two, and now and then,
When next he speaks, give out a blink of sun,
But not that he forget 'twas tempest, Kate.
Take out thy kerchief—hast thou one ; now draw it
From corner into corner ; be it clean ?
Now pass it cross thy face, and back again ;
Now use it as do ladies use a fan,
'Twill show a gentle agitation, Kate ;
Swing on one foot thy body to and fro,

And with thy other beat upon the ground.
Now, Sir, at once propose for her—'sdeath, sir !
Have not a faint heart !

YOUNG SMALL.

No !

RALPH.

Remember you're
A gentleman.

YOUNG SMALL.

I do !

RALPH.

And so you are
From top to toe.

YOUNG SMALL.

I thank you, Ralph—you're good.

RALPH.

And so your father was before you, sir,
And quite as much his father before him ;
Was he not, sir ?

YOUNG SMALL.

Ay, quite as much, good Ralph,
Or, if he was not, we're no gentlemen.

RALPH.

Then, now at once propose for her. Hem ! twice
Or thrice before you speak, and broadly hint
At her gentility.

YOUNG SMALL.

Engaging Kate—

As gentleman should gentlewoman wed,
So fain would I to wife take thee, my Kate !
And now I must take breath ; I tell thee, Ralph,
To woo a lady, is no easy thing. *(Retires).*

RALPH.

Kate, canst thou blush ? If not, why hang thy head,
And look as though thou knew'st not where to look,
And clasp thy hands and twirl thy thumbs about,
And make a shift to squeeze out half a sigh,
But loud enough to hear. Well done ! well done !
Bespeaks her every thing a gentlewoman—
Does it not, sir ? *(To YOUNG SMALL.)*

YOUNG SMALL.

Upon my life it does.

RALPH.

Now bring her to the point of yes or no.

YOUNG SMALL.

Of yes or no ?

RALPH.

Yes !

YOUNG SMALL.

Yes or no ! I vow
I tremble at the thought on't—just I feel
As I did play at loggats, and a pound
Were laid upon the game, and mine the throw.

RALPH.

Well, sir ?

YOUNG SMALL.

Good Ralph—I'll take a little time.

RALPH.

So do. He comes to pop the question, Kate.
When first he speaks, no answer render him :
Nor yet the second time—nor yet the third.

KATE.

No, Ralph ?

RALPH.

Be quiet, Kate ; it were not meet,
In such a strait, that gentlewomen speak,
The thought should seem to take away thy breath ;
Thou should'st appear as thou wast like to faint,
And faint, sweet Kate !—I'll be beside thee—fall
Upon my shoulder—and when I say “ now ”
Come to thyself—but mind, not all at once,
But bit by bit—I'll have him at thy feet.
Look at him once, and turn away again—
Another time—and try to turn away,
But, finding that thou canst not do't, cry “ yes ! ”
And, overcome, fall plump into his arms !
You'll mind.

KATE.

Be sure of me.

RALPH.

Make sure of him !
Up to her now, sir,—now or never, Sir !

YOUNG SMALL.

Dear Kate ! wilt be my bride ?

RALPH.

Again, sweet sir !

YOUNG SMALL.

Dear Kate ! wilt be my bride, a second time ?

The third time (*KATE falls on RALPH's shoulder.*)

Wilt thou be my bride, sweet Kate ?

RALPH.

I do believe she faints.

YOUNG SMALL.

She does indeed !

She's a true lady—on my life she is.

RALPH.

Down on your knees, sir—both your knees—and chafe

Her hands with yours—kissing them now and then—

And 'gainst she comes unto herself, 'twere well

If you could squeeze a tear into your eye :—

Now Kate, awake ! Your lover's at your feet

Kneeling as doth behove a gentleman—now—

KATE.

(*Recovers—follows RALPH's directions.*)

Yes !

(*Throwing herself into SMALL's arms, nearly oversetting him.*)

RALPH.

Hold up, sweet sir, and try to bear

Thy overpowering happiness—to both

I wish a world of joy.—Take her apart

Into the garden ; never drop thy suit

Until she name the day, and be't to-morrow.

“ The cup, sir, and the lip ! ”—But, gentle Kate,

'Tis not enough the bird is lim'd, behoves

You have him in your hand—good sir!—fair lady!

I give you joy, and wish you a good day. *[Exit.*

YOUNG SMALL.

Come, gentle Kate, that is to be my bride.

KATE.

O, la, sir!

YOUNG SMALL.

Sir! call me thy Thomas, Kate.

My name is Thomas—master Thomas.

KATE.

La!

I ne'er can call thee Thomas.

YOUNG SMALL.

Yes, thou canst

And wilt—dear Thomas!—thy own Thomas!

KATE.

La!

YOUNG SMALL.

As I will call thee my own Kate, be sure,

As soon as we are man and wife.

KATE.

O, la!

Don't talk of it.

YOUNG SMALL.

Of what else should I talk?

Come Kate—my wife!—my lady Kate!

KATE.

O, la!

[Exeunt.

SCENE III.—THE BAR AND PARLOUR.

Enter the HOSTESS, *conducting* LAST, MORTICE, *and*
MALLET.

HOSTESS.

WALK in, good master Mallet ; gentlemen,
Walk in, you're welcome. What will't please you have ?
We've choice for all, and nought but's of the best.

MALLET.

We'll taste your ale, good mistress Trusty. Hark !
How does your pretty barmaid ? Did you speak,
As you did promise, a good word for me ?

HOSTESS.

I did.

MALLET.

And was she pleas'd ?

HOSTESS.

'Tis hard to say
When maids are pleas'd. When I myself was one,
What most I seem'd was oft what least I felt.

MORTICE.

Your ear, kind hostess.—Gave you mistress Bess
The message I did send her ?

HOSTESS.

Word for word.

MORTICE.

What word did she return thee ?

HOSTESS.

Marry, none !

Bess is a prudent wench. Maids' thoughts go cheap
That can be had for asking ! Little worth,
Yet hoarded charily, great price they bring.
I found it so myself when I was young.

LAST.

A word, good mistress Trusty, when you're done.

HOSTESS.

I'm at your service now, sir.

LAST.

Handed you
My gift to Bess ?

HOSTESS.

I did.

LAST.

And took she it ?

HOSTESS.

She took it not.—'Tis here for you again.
Presents to maids are earnest. Take they them,
They next should take the donors. Had not I
Thought so in my free days, I should have won
A dower in gifts ! You shall be serv'd anon.

MORTICE.

I guess you've come back speed.

LAST.

Hast thou come better ?

MALLETT.

The fault's our own. Love's not a game at law

Wherein the player is not he that stakes.
I'll play my game myself, and ask sweet Bess
To church to-morrow !

LAST.

So will I.

MORTICE.

And I.

[*Exeunt.*

(*BESS crosses the stage after them with a tankard.*)

Enter HOSTESS *conducting* BELMONT *and* WILFORD.

HOSTESS.

Walk in, walk in—I'll show you to a room.

WILFORD.

And please you get my chamber ready straight ;
I will at once to bed.

HOSTESS.

I'll see to't, sir.

He early goes to rest—he must be ill.

Love-sick perhaps? There's comfort for him then,
Like all his sex he'll soon get over that.

BELMONT.

Hostess !

HOSTESS.

Your will?

BELMONT.

I'd try your wine—is't good?

HOSTESS.

The very best !

Please you sit down, good sirs.

[*Places chairs and exit.*

BELMONT.

Still rapt as ever !
Rouse thee, Wilford, rouse thee !
Shake off this lethargy, and be a man !
Take faster hold of hope ! we'll find her yet.
But should we fail, what then ? Art thou to pine
To death ? This malady is of the head
More than the heart. Believe it can be cur'd
Thou'lt find 'twill be so. Be thyself again !
Be free ! But once beheld may be forgot.

WILFORD.

Yes, if a thing that any fellow hath.
I may forget a diamond, can I find
Another one as rich : but show me one
That is the paragon of all the mine,
And try if that's forgot, though seen but once !
Say that but once I see a beauteous star,
I may forget it for another star :
But say but once I do behold the sun,
And name the orb will blot its image out !

BELMONT.

But of a single draught of love to die !

WILFORD.

Why not ? There is your poison, strong and weak.
One kind admits of antidote—one not.
One by the drachm, one by the scruple, kills :
Another by the grain—for not in bulk,
But subtleness, the lethal virtue lies.
So are there kinds in love ! a dozen shafts

May gall him, and the bounding deer run on,—
But one shot home, behold he's down at once !

(BESS enters with wine, which she places on a table, at some distance from BELMONT and WILFORD; the former sees her at once, and regards her with an expression of fixed admiration—the latter remaining in a state of perfect abstraction.)

BELMONT.

E'er saw'st thou thing so fair ?

WILFORD.

What speak'st thou of ?

BELMONT.

Yon maid that waits on us.

WILFORD.

I've seen ! I've seen !

BELMONT.

This is to dream !

He sleeps—I'll wake him then. My pretty maid,
Hand thou the cup to yonder gentleman.

(BESS, whose eyes have just fallen on WILFORD, stands gazing upon him, apparently insensible to every thing else.)

What ails the girl ? does she not hear ? She's fixed
As statue to the pedestal—what is't
She gazes at ? As I do live, 'tis he !
Commend me to a sallow cheek ! She's smit,
If Cupid is a marksman ! Maids, I've heard,
Like books they weep over ; the which, the more

They're made to melt, the more do they devour!
See how she reads him! Marry, she will get
The book by heart!

BESS.

'Tis he! 'tis he! How's this?
I feel at home while I do look on him.
Seem near me hearts I know. I could believe
The roof our own. I scarce would start—were now
The door to ope—to see my mother's face!
Yet what is he to me? Acquaintance of
My eyes, whom ne'er they met but once before!

BELMONT.

A shot! a shot! Cupid is in the vein!

BESS (*drawing her father's picture from her bosom*)

How like! how like! how very—very like!
There only wants a smile upon the lip—
I think the lip more sweet the smile away—
Fie! 'tis my father's lip! My father then,
As often I have heard my mother say,
Just new had won my mother's love—I ween
My mother then smiled too! Who ought to smile,
If not the maid that's woo'd by him she's wed?
Her Bess will never wed!

BELMONT.

A sigh! Besure
The fawn is struck.

BESS.

Just now I felt at home,
And now I feel a thousand miles from home!

Things, strange before, are now still stranger grown,
And he most strange of all—the farthest off,
The least expected ever to be near—
The sight of whom brought home so near to Bess !
What's Bess's home to him? He'd pass the door,
And would not know she dwelt there ! If he did,
Would never thank the latch to let him in !
He has a home and friends that love him there—
Friends that he loves. Poor Bess is far from home,
Was never farther—never half so far.

HOSTESS (*without*).

Why Bess ! what Bess !

BELMONT.

How deep she is entranced.

HOSTESS *enters, and goes to her.*

HOSTESS.

Why Bess, what ails thee, child ?

BESS (*abstractedly*).

Anon ! anon !

I'll do it this moment.

HOSTESS.

Do it ! what wilt do ?

BESS (*confused and hurriedly*).

Whate'er you bid.

HOSTESS.

Why, what has happen'd to her !

Look to the bar till I come back again.

Why Bess, dost hear me, that thou dost not move ?

BESS (*confused*).

I'll go this moment—where am I to go?

HOSTESS.

The girl's bewilder'd! "Where am I to go!"

Canst tell me what I said to thee just now?

BESS.

Thou saidst, I think—or I mistake—thou saidst—

Thou saidst—perhaps I did not rightly hear;

Thinking of one thing, one forgets at times

Another thing—thou saidst—it was not that—

Nor that; in sooth, I know not what thou saidst.

HOSTESS.

I knew't. I bade thee go and mind the bar.

BESS.

I'll do't. (*Still looking in the direction of WILFORD.*)

HOSTESS.

Thou'lt do't! and go'st thou not to do it?

Yonder's the bar—why, Bess, thou art asleep!

Thou dreamest! Rouse thee, Bess. Go, mind the bar.

The girl's not like herself.

[*Exeunt Bess and Hostess severally.*]

BELMONT.

A point-blank shot!

An entry this in Cupid's register!

Lord Wilford, was't not noon with you just now?

WILFORD.

Noon!

BELMONT.

Felt you not the sun?

WILFORD.

The sun ! what sun ?

BELMONT.

I'faith a glorious one, but not so kind
As that which shines by day ; for not a beam
It threw on aught beside. You were its earth—
The grateful earth unlike—the orb alone
For which its light seem'd made ; absorbing it,
Without so much as e'en a smile, to show
You knew't from very darkness !

WILFORD.

You are merry ;
And I can only wonder that you are,—
As sickness doth, that health can feed, while she
Herself from rarest viands loathing turns.
It is not fancy ; or, if fancy 'tis,
'Tis such as breeds reality—as, from
Imagination only of disease,
Disease itself will grow. Do I but dream ?
Say that the anguish of a probed wound
Is but a dream—say he that writhes in fire
Is fancy haunted—just as much am I !
Seest not my fever ? Is't not in mine eye ?
My cheek ? if not, my pulse will show it thee !
For if its throb be not the counter one
To that which health doth know, 'tis anything
But index of my heart.

(HOSTESS *enters*).

Ho ! Bess, I say !

*Enter BESS, who is immediately perceived by WILFORD,
and meeting his eye, stands as transfixed.*

Why, Bess, how's this? Is't true thou wast o'erheard
To one, to two, and three to give consent,
When ask'd to be a wife? Art thou not pledged
To marry Ralph?

WILFORD.

Is she to be a bride!

BELMONT.

Are you awake?

WILFORD.

I am! I am!—as one,
That long at sea doth pine him sick for land,
And, ever dreaming on't, starts up at last,
With the rebound which says his bark has struck,
And drowns in sight and very reach of it!

BELMONT.

Is that the maid?

WILFORD.

It is. Now wonder at me!
Wouldst thou not ask, sprang ever that from earth?
Look there, and think of an anatomy!
Can lurk the canker death in such a cheek?
Is not that flower imperishable, as
It lodged the virtue of the feigned one,
Which never dies—in poet's song 'yclept
The immortal amaranth! Is she to be
A bride? I'll speak to her!

BEL MONT.

Thou'rt mad !

WILFORD.

And if I am,
Then once at least is madness rational.
Being what I am, not to be mad as I,
Were to be kindred to the cloddish brute,
That looks at her and knows not what it sees !—
Prevent me not ! Art pledg'd to any one ?
Art thou to be a bride ? Say yes or no.

HOSTESS.

Speak, Bess ! say yes ! Thou know'st thou'rt pledged
To Ralph ?

Enter RALPH.

Maids, sir, you know, are coy—give me thy hand.
There—art thou now content ?

*(Places her hand in RALPH'S without her
being conscious of it.)*

WILFORD.

Content !—Enough !
O'ermeasure on't ! I've done,—yet would I touch
The precious thing, so much I've coveted,
Was ne'er till now in reach of—now so near—
Do find can ne'er be mine !—Whoe'er thou art,
Thou art acquaintance of my heart—as soon
As seen, beloved ! I saw thee only once,
That once too oft !—For then I thought upon

My marriage bell, and wish'd it might be thine,
But now, when thine they ring, they ring my knell !
'Tis not a crime to kiss thy hand, while yet
The banning of the priest forbids me not.
There ! Let thy bridegroom at the altar fix,
In presence of the watching cherubim,
A truer seal upon thy lip than that
I've fix'd upon thy hand—though his shall last
'Till doomsday ! Take me hence ! 'Tis hard to look
At what we wish were ours, and, while we do't,
Persuade ourselves it can't be.—Take me hence !
The only sight of her is hold too strong
For me to struggle 'gainst ! It pulls me towards her !
I feel as it did suck my vision in !
My breath ! my life !—I cannot quit her ! *

(Breaks from BELMONT and rushes towards her.

*RALPH interposes. WILFORD seems to have
lost all power over himself. BELMONT ap-
proaches him to lead him out ; but, when at
the wing, he turns—gazes distractedly upon
BESS.*

Lost !

*(Rushes out, followed by BELMONT, and at the
same moment BESS sinks senseless on the
shoulder of RALPH.)*

ACT III.

SCENE I.—THE FRONT OF THE QUEEN'S ARMS.

Enter PETER from the Inn, singing.

A white gown and girdle,
A knot of the same ;
And come to our wedding,
Both damsel and dame !

PETER.

A charming day ! A most pleasant day ! and pleasant and charming work too—work fit for such a day ! Right excellent work ! Wedding and feasting ! The feasting for me ; the wedding for them that like it. For mine own part, holding the sex to be a provocative to wrath, which is sin, I'd sooner hang than wed ! But for the feasting—there I'm your man ! Roast, boiled, or fried, was never the dish that couldn't warrant me the smoothest-temper'd fellow in Christendom—with the special provision that there was enough on't. I wouldn't say as much of a cup, for a cup is a thing that a man of very oil and sugar will sometimes quarrel over ; but, from ale to sack, I defy any man living to say he ever saw me quarrel *with* my cup—barring the liquor was bad, or the

cup empty. If I'm not the man for a feast, then never man sat down to one. I could feast it you seven days out of the week, and let him that can, do more. Nay, were there eight days in the week, and the week nothing the longer, I could feast it to the eighth day too. So the good cheer sha'n't lag for me. (*Sings.*)

Your bran new jerkins, gallants, don,
Or jerkins new, as you may ;
But the gallant whose mood is not o' the best,
Were best to stay away.

I'll give them a song. Marry, that can I, when I am tuned to the pitch. I'm none of your sober singers—your trollers of long-winded ballads with a burden to them. I hate your burdens ! To be outsung by every knave that has three notes upon his voice. I like to sing alone; but then it must be when the liquor has tuned me to the pitch. Your liquor's a marvellous fine master of singing. When I'm tuned to the pitch, I'd like you to show me the man that can sing better, or the song that's too many for me. Nay, though I know not the air, I'll put one to it. I'll sing them a song—none of your ditties, such as my old master used to grumble.

In love fair Celia fell, O,
With alas ! and O ! and well-a-day !
And her love the maid would tell, O,—
Love comes and goes like sun in May !

Above your reach ten feet, O,
With alas ! and O ! and a well-a-day !
Appears ten times as sweet, O,—
Love comes and goes like sun in May !

The youth he loved the maid, O,
With alas! and O! and a well-a-day!
But to woo her was afraid, O,—
Love comes and goes like sun in May!

But when her love she told, O,
With alas! and O! and a well-a-day!
His love grew wondrous cold, O,—
Love comes and goes like sun in May!

My moral would you find, O,
With alas! and O! and a well-a-day!
No maid should tell her mind, O,—
Love comes and goes like sun in May!

Enter OLD SMALL as off a Journey.

OLD SMALL.

I thank thee, fortune! Kind art thou to me!
He's here! he's here! Why, who should sing that strain,
If not the varlet knave he took with him?
That can't be he!

PETER.

My master's father here!

OLD SMALL.

Good sir,—

PETER (*aside*).

All's right. He knows me not.

OLD SMALL.

I pray,
Heard you a strain just now?

PETER.

I know not what you call a strain. I heard a varlet

trying to play a tune upon his nose, which I could have pulled for him, 'twas so villanously ill done. If you call that a strain, let never man sing a strain to me ! I know when I hear a strain. In a strain there is measure of time, which is the main part of it ; measure of tune, which is no indifferent part of it ; and measure of voice, which, though it rank not with either of the former, is yet allowed to be a part : but here was neither measure of time, tune, nor voice, but measure enough of the lack of them. If playing a tune upon the nose be a strain, why then I heard a strain just now ; but whip me if I'd stand to hear such strain again.

OLD SMALL.

This could never be he.

PETER.

He eyes me hard.

OLD SMALL.

One question more, good sir. What kind of man was he you heard sing ?

PETER.

What ! your nose tuner ? Why, a tolerable sufficient man—nay, a very sufficient man ; say he had the dress of one.

OLD SMALL.

How was he dressed, I pray you ?

PETER.

Marry, with cap, jerkin, hose, and shoes ; but the cap was out at the crown, the jerkin was out at the elbows, the hose were out all over ; and as for the shoes, it would

tax a conjuror to find out why he wore them, for the uppers were the most that remained of them, and they were out at the toes. Shirt had he none, or he showed it not; doublet had he ever, his jerkin must have eaten it up; for it was a most incontinent one—a devourer of all kinds of cloth—coarse, middle, fine, and superfine! and of all colours, a superlative sample of patch-work, a very nosegay of a jerkin, saving the odour on't. If he was a gentleman, he was a gentleman in jest; if he was a beggar, he was a beggar in earnest. Service he could never have had; for bowels of flesh and blood could not have committed it, to put a human body into such rat's livery.

OLD SMALL.

My scarecrow Peter, to a certainty.

Enter YOUNG SMALL from the Inn.

PETER.

My master! In, sir! in!

YOUNG SMALL.

Why, what's the matter?

OLD SMALL (*to PETER*).

Worthy sir,—

PETER.

Anon—

YOUNG SMALL.

My father!

PETER.

Fear not,—knows he not 'tis I.

YOUNG SMALL.

Nay, if he finds us out, my fortune's marr'd.

PETER.

Stay ! and I'll rid you of him in a trice.

OLD SMALL.

Pray you, what gentleman is that ?

PETER.

Gentleman ! Ne'er saw you a lord before ?

OLD SMALL.

Is he a lord ?

PETER.

Is he a lord !—Look at him ! Is he not a lord ? Not your lord mayor, forsooth — a lord to-day, a master to-morrow ; but an every-day lord—a lord, and no thanks to you ; nay, an' he halt at the third hob-nail, yet shall he be a lord. Avoid him, or carry your cap in your hand. He takes measure of state upon him. If you take the wall of him, you may chance to take from the wall to the stocks. It happened no later than yesterday ; though, truth to say, the youth was a forward one—one of your care-for-noughts from the city—a fellow that would hector it like a prince, though, six days out of the seven, I warrant you, his father wipes his beard with an apron.

OLD SMALL.

What ! put he him in the stocks ?

PETER.

Ay did he ; and from the stocks into prison, whence if he be not transferred to the gallows, he has more luck than grace.

OLD SMALL.

How angered he the lord, I pray you ?

PETER.

Marry, as I said, he took the wall of him ; whereat the lord commended the wall to his head ; which he not relishing, commended his hand to the lord's cheek ; who thereupon commended his body to the stocks, and thence to the prison ; whence, when he is delivered, 'twill be upon a release in full, signed by the sheriff, and executed by the hangman—for he is a great lord.

OLD SMALL.

Alack ! so it should seem, sir !—Know you, sir, the name of the youth ?

PETER.

I heard it, but have forgotten it, and yet have I a memory ; but 'twas a very patch of a name. One good substantial name would make three such. 'Twas something like Sprat—or—

OLD SMALL.

'Twasn't Small ?

PETER.

Small was the name !

OLD SMALL.

Alack, sir, 'tis my son !

PETER.

Thy son !—Avoid !—Avoid ! Safety for thee lies hence—here, danger ! Shares he thy blood, and shalt thou not share his punishment ? Would he have transgressed but for thee, who but for thee had never lived to transgress ? Shall he on whom treason is fathered

hang, and the father of the traitor go free? Avoid, I say! Begone! Fine awaits thee! Imprisonment awaits thee! A halter awaits thee!

OLD SMALL.

■ Might I but have speech
Of that fair lord? Good sir, hast thou his ear?
Look, here are twenty pieces,—speak for me,
And call them thine!

PETER.

'Twould nought avail!

OLD SMALL.

Good sir,
I'll make the twenty thirty! Take them, sir!
Good thirty pieces only for a word!
Come, then, I'll make the thirty forty! What!
Won't that suffice? What will, then? Sir, you see
A poor old man that has an only son,
Whom he, in evil hour, let go from him,
Thinking that he could live without him, till
The task he tried, but found too hard a one!
Then choice had none except to follow him,
Or stay at home and die! And here is come
To Rumford all the way from London, sir,—
On foot, sir!—Take the forty pieces, sir!—
Nay, then, take fifty!—sixty!—all I have!
And only speak a good word for my son.

YOUNG SMALL.

Peter, thou'st spoiled it all! Ne'er heed! ne'er heed!
'Thy son is not to hang.

■ (*Speaking with his back towards OLD SMALL.*)

OLD SMALL.

O thanks for that !

But he's in prison. Ope the door for him,
Although to close't on me ! I'll take his place :
Perhaps of right I should. I held the lash
And rein—if he's refractory or rash,
Why is he so, but that I used them not ?
He better were, had he been better train'd—
That he's not so, his training bear the blame.
That lies with me. Yet was my fault my love—
My too fond love !—so fond it could not see
How duty could be harsh and yet be kind.

YOUNG SMALL.

Father !

OLD SMALL.

How !—What !—My son ! Ah, Thomas, Thomas,
To pass thee on thy father for a lord !
And who is this ? Thou varlet—knave—rank knave !
(To PETER.)

YOUNG SMALL.

Nay, father, well 'twas meant ; thou comest here
To see great things.

OLD SMALL.

Is this a sample of them ?
What kind of jerkin's that for thee to wear ?
'Twould suit a lord ! And trunks to match withal,
And doublet ! Board and lodging for a life
Thou carry'st on thy back ! A cap and plume !
Why, for what cobwebs, Thomas, hast thou changed
Thy father's heavy crowns ! What's that I see ?

Wear'st thou a rapier too ! The end of time
Is come ! And thou, thou ape—for nothing good
But tricks ! Thou mischief ! Evil ne'er at rest !
For whom the hide were clothing good enough !
Are these my savings that do shine on thee ?
The which to keep, thy master's back more oft
Did lack than go provided ! Cap and plume
For thee !—A halter for thee !—Sirrah ! I'll to town
Again. No hope ! No help ! Discomfort all !
Care lost ! Love wasted ! Thomas, fare-thee-well !
I shake thy hand in bitterness, I do !
I'll strive to live without thee !—To what use ?
I tried, and couldn't do't. (*Falls on his neck.*)

YOUNG SMALL.

Take not on so !
Or I'll take on. In sooth I will ! I'm not
A stone—a lump of flint—a piece of steel.
Let our apparel pass—or note it but
For joy, for very joy ! Thou hast a son
That's born to fortune !—to high fortune ! Know,
To-day's my wedding day !

OLD SMALL.

Thy wedding day !

YOUNG SMALL.

My wedding day.

OLD SMALL.

And who's to be thy bride ?

YOUNG SMALL.

A lady.

OLD SMALL.

How ! Why, wherewithal hast thou
To keep a lady ?

YOUNG SMALL.

Keep a lady ! No ;
Sufficient 'tis, methinks, I marry her.
My lady shall keep me. How say you now ?
My lady's blood ! She's one that comes of kin—
That looks for lands and coffers—that is heir
To titles ! Wonder not though thou shouldst have
A baron to thy grandson ! Close accounts,
And shut up shop !

OLD SMALL.

I'm all amaze ! I'd like
To see thy bride.

YOUNG SMALL.

Thou shalt, but not to speak—
For, though thy son for gentle state was born,
Who looks on thee, saw he a counter e'er,
Bethinks him of a shop ; so might'st thou mar
My fortune.

OLD SMALL.

Knows she not thy father's calling ?
Thomas ! nought prospers like plain dealing, son !
But make thy fortune thy own way—thou ne'er
Wouldst follow mine !

YOUNG SMALL.

Content thee, father, that
My fortune's made ! E'en follow us to church ;

But not a word until the knot be tied,
And I be fast and sure a gentleman !
Hoa, Kate ! Sweet Kate ! E'er saw you lady, father ?
You now shall look on one ! The form of lady,
The air of lady—face of lady—yea
The eyes, nose, mouth, and cheeks of lady. Kate !
Come forth, my bride !

KATE (*coming to the door*).

Who calls ?

YOUNG SMALL.

Your bridegroom, Kate.
To church ! to church !

KATE.

Before my bridesmaid comes !

YOUNG SMALL.

Thy bridesmaid, Kate, is not to marry thee,
But I, and I am here ; so loiter not.
The sexton's part is done—the doors are oped ;
The clerk is ready with his horn and pen ;
The parson's gown'd, and standing by the book ;
The merry bells are on the watch to ring—
There want but thee and me ; so come to church !

KATE.

Without a bridesmaid, I should be ashamed !

YOUNG SMALL.

How delicate ! Your bridesmaid yonder comes ;
So come, my Lady Kate !

KATE.

Heigho !

YOUNG SMALL.

How sweet !
Lean on me, Kate.

KATE.

I fear to take thy arm.

YOUNG SMALL.

How elegant ! Nay, Kate—

KATE.

But if I must—

YOUNG SMALL.

How like a lady doth she carry her
In all things ! Bear up, Kate ! Take courage, Kate !
Come on ! Now warrant me a gentleman !

[*Exeunt.*

Music without.—*Enter WILFORD and BELMONT.*

WILFORD.

Love plies the rack on which itself doth lie !
Tell it of solace, and 'twill talk of pain,
Which to augment its piteous profit 'tis !
So far unlike, love's merchant is to him
That trades for pelf. He hears his venture's sunk,
And cries, "'tis gone !"—tries to forget his loss—
Hoists up fresh hope, and launches other freight.
No other freight for him that trades in love !
His venture haply founder'd—no new hope !—
His dreamy day of speculation's done !
His breast hath room for nothing, but the thought
How many fathom deep his hope doth lie !

He has no use for life, except to make
Its cheek a feast for comfortless despair ;
Nor ever smiles again, except to see
How fast it wastes away !

BELMONT.

The lover's tune !

WILFORD.

They come to carry her to church ! To own
The happy hand she'll take to lead her there,
Would I forego the clasp of Fortune's own,
And all her gifts of rank and wealth refund !

BELMONT.

Yet gave she these in kindness. By their means
Your love might prosper yet. What need you do,
But doff this sordid guise, appear yourself,
And ask and have her ?

WILFORD.

No ! not even her
For their deserts !—Myself ! What's of myself
That is not here ? Call I the prouder suit
I should put on—myself ? Call I my name,
No merit ever won of mine—myself ?
They're nought of me but what a knave might wear
As well as I ! My ardent soul's myself !—
My heart, too proud to be in fortune's debt,
Where merit sole should win—myself ! My mind,
That its chief store by nature's riches sets
With this its vassal case, such as it is—
Myself !—The only self I'd use or thank

To win my love or friend ! So end my part
What it began ! I'll look once more upon her !

[*Retires with BELMONT.*]

Enter RALPH and HOSTESS, meeting.

HOSTESS.

Ralph, where's thy bride ?

RALPH.

She's in her chamber still.

HOSTESS.

Then bring her forth.

RALPH.

She does refuse to come.

HOSTESS.

For what

Delays she thus ? Her bonnet's trimm'd—her coif

She has—I sent her in her wedding gown

An hour ago, I'm certain 'twas a fit !

I'll fetch her forth myself. [*Enters the house.*]

*Enter YOUNG SMALL and KATE, followed by OLD
SMALL and PETER.*

YOUNG SMALL.

Joy ! Give me joy !

RALPH.

How, sir, so soon abroad ! The knotting done !

YOUNG SMALL.

E'en so, good master Ralph ! Father, my bride—

KATE.

Thy father !

YOUNG SMALL.

Even so, my pretty Kate !
But fit that all do know thou art my wife.
Good friends, my lady—Mistress Thomas Small.
Now do me justice 'fore my father, Kate ;
He thinks me fool—prove thou that I am wise.
Thy kin, my Kate—thy kin, my lady Kate ?

KATE.

Anan ?

YOUNG SMALL.

Anan ! Thy kin ?

KATE.

Anan ?

YOUNG SMALL.

Thy kin ?
Thy house ? thy family ? thy pedigree !

KATE.

Anan ?

YOUNG SMALL.

Anan again !
Whence drawest thou thy noble blood, my Kate ?
How comest it to thee ? Is it by the male
Or female side ? The lands thou'rt heiress to—
The titles that shall fall to thee ?—In right
Of whom expecte'st them ?

Enter STRAP, half tipsy.

STRAP.

Fine doings here !

A wedding ! So !—I'll thank you for a knot
For honest master Strap.

YOUNG SMALL.

Peace, fellow !—Peace !
The knotting's o'er.

STRAP.

O then the bride's a wife !
No doubt, good sirs, you've all had kisses round ;
So now my turn is come. Sir, by your leave.

YOUNG SMALL.

Out, knave ! Thou'rt full of ale.

STRAP.

A lucky day
For thee, when thou art full of aught so good !
I say I'll have a kiss.

YOUNG SMALL.

What art thou ?

STRAP.

What ?
A cobbler.

YOUNG SMALL.

What !—A fellow kiss my wife,
That is not master even of a craft !

STRAP.

That shows thy wisdom ! cobbling is the chief
Of crafts.

YOUNG SMALL.

The chief !—you hear him, masters !—chief
Of crafts—I question if the half of one !—

Yea, third of one !—A cordiner's a craft ;
What he doth make the cobbler only mends,
And so's no better than a patch, a botch,
A nail, a tack, a stitch,—a cobbler !—what !
A cobbler kiss my wife !—an awl—a piece
Of wax and packthread—and the bristle of
A hog—and there's a cobbler ! Hark thee, Kate ?
Could'st bear of such a lout to take a kiss ?
No ! never gentlewoman could !

STRAP.

Young man,
Thou'rt drunk, or mad—or both—thou knowest not
What cobbling is ! 'Tis part of every trade,
And the chief part,—no trade but hath its cobbler.
Your law hath cobblers, your divinity,
Your surgery, your physic. There are cobblers
In merchandise and war. Who does not know
What cobblers are there 'mongst your politicians ?
If that should be a craft which is most followed,
Then cobbling is a craft—the chief of crafts.

YOUNG SMALL.

Well hast thou argued it ! Yet provest thou not
Thy right to kiss my bride !

STRAP.

Of new made bride
'Tis right of any one to take a kiss ;
So prithee stand aside.—Nay, wilt thou not,
Thou'lt learn, belongs he to a trade or not,
A cobbler is a man ! But no—no broil

Upon a wedding day. That were not like
A cobbler ! Come—a bargain, sir—I'll leave it
To your lady.

YOUNG SMALL.

Gives she leave, you're welcome, sir—
Small likelihood of that !

STRAP.

Fair lady !—what !
Slut ! hussy ! vixen ! wanton ! cockatrice !

YOUNG SMALL.

How knave ?

STRAP.

Knave ! she's the knave ! Prevent me not.
I'll call her what I list, sir—what I list
I'll do to her. (*Embraces her.*)
Make rosin of her !—pack-thread !
Nail her into a last, you bridegroom !—Take
Strap, hammer, pincers to her !—turn her
Into thongs and shoe-strings !—Wherefore should I not,
That am her father !

YOUNG SMALL.

What ?

STRAP.

O run away !
Oh, vixen ! mad-cap ! Oh my daughter, Kate,
And have I found thee ?

KATE.

Father, I am married—
Married unto a gentleman !

STRAP (*seeing* OLD SMALL).

Odzooks !

Good Master Small !—factor of minikins
And corking pins—of pins of all degrees !—
Hearing that thou hadst traced thy thriftless child
To Rumford here, and having lost my own,
Good fortune put it in my crazy pate
To follow thee,—and lo ! what speed I've come !
My daughter's found—doubly found !—She says
She's married to a gentleman !—Hast found
Thy son ?

OLD SMALL.

Yes, Master Strap, he's there.

STRAP.

This he !
So, sirrah ! jackanapes ! And have I craved
Thy leave to kiss thy bride ? Scorn'st thou me now ?
And if thou dost, thou art my son-in-law—
Yea, thou'rt married to a cobbler's daughter.
And what of that ? If not a gentleman,
A cobbler is the king of jolly fellows !

RALPH.

Kate ! shall I now doff cap unto thy spouse ?

KATE.

Yes ; if thou dost what fitteth thee to do.

RALPH.

Thy gentleman hath dwindled to a pin !

KATE.

A pin that's worth a bush of thorns, like thee !

RALPH.

Give you much joy, good sir ; you've wed your match ;
Who doubts it, let him !—I will swear thy bride
A lady—much as thou'rt a gentleman !
Nay, frown not —— (*good humouredly.*)

YOUNG SMALL.

Frown ! who ever saw me frown ?
I have lost all day at loggats, and I'd thank
The man could say, he ever saw me frown !
Come, Kate !—come fathers both.

KATE.

Wilt take me, sir ?

YOUNG SMALL.

Take thee ! have I not taken thee ? I will—
And keep thee too, so thou wilt let me Kate.
(YOUNG SMALL, KATE, OLD SMALL, STRAP and PETER
retire.)

(*Enter HOSTESS from house.*)

HOSTESS.

I vow the girl's bewildered ! yes and no,
And no and yes, are all you get from her !
Nor yet will she come forth.—Is that her step ?
It is. She comes.

(*Enter BESS, dressed as the Beggar's daughter.*)

Why, Bess, are you not dress'd ?
In trim like that went ever bride to church ?

RALPH.

Trim good enough for me. Come then, my bride ;

Come, pretty Bess ! your hand to go to church !

BESS.

I go not, sir, a bride, to church with you.

WILFORD (*aside*).

Hope ! hearty friend ! art thou come back to me ?

I feel thee, yet can scarce believe I do,

So sure I thought we had for ever parted.

Welcome, O welcome !

HOSTESS.

Gav'st thou not consent

To marry Ralph ?

BESS.

Consent I could not give,

My heart was never author of the deed,

My tongue did act without its privacy,—

The hand you covet, others' wishes claim

Disposal of—I have parents.

RALPH.

Where are they ?

BESS.

Alas ! I know not ; but I go to seek them.

RALPH.

Who are thy parents then, my pretty Bess ?

Tell me, sweet Bess !

HOSTESS.

Sweet Bess, thy father's name ?

RALPH.

What is thy father ?

BESS.

The blind beggar, sir,
Of Bethnal Green.

YOUNG SMALL.

You see I might have wed
A beggar, father. Give me praise for that.
My Kate, a kiss!

RALPH.

Sweet Bess, had'st thou for father, craftsman low
As low can be, I should be well content
To call him father, too ; a beggar, though,
Is father none for me ! [Exit RALPH.]

HOSTESS.

Hold up thy head,
My pretty Bess ! Thou'rt bride too good for them !
Above their mark ! Shame on them ! shame ! I would
I knew the man were worth thee, Bess.

WILFORD.

What kind
Of man were he ?

HOSTESS.

Why, likely, such as thou,
For looks !—though I've seen better.—Met we not
Before ?—'Amercy !—Yesternight we did,
When thou did'st rave of knells, and wedding bells,
For love of Bess ! Art now in raving mood ?
Or have thy wits, last night, a roaming went,
Return'd with this fair morning ? Come, confess,
'Thou'rt brother to my son ?

WILFORD.

Of none, good dame,
Who slight that maid !

HOSTESS.

What ! would'st thou take the maid ?

WILFORD.

Not *take* her, dame !

HOSTESS.

I knew't—

WILFORD.

You're over quick ;
You stop my speech, nor know the way 'twould run !

HOSTESS.

'Twould run ?—It runs, I wot, no other way
Than that of half thy sex, when they find out
A woman's dower's herself.

WILFORD.

You wrong me, dame !

HOSTESS.

Why, said you not you would not take the maid ?

WILFORD.

I grant I did ; but—

HOSTESS.

But ? Give me no buts !
Say downright no at once !—" But this—but that ;
You love us—but ! You'd wed us—but !" As much
You'd love as you would wed ! You'd wed, besure,
If sure you lov'd ! Yet you *do* love, you say,
But cannot wed,—and love indeed you do,

H

But—in your own coin, to be quits with you,
You love not for ourselves!

WILFORD.

I'faith, not so !
And to convince you that your thought doth hold
The counter-course to that which mine doth steer,
I'll say I'd take the maid ; but——(*runs.*)

HOSTESS.

There !

WILFORD.

Nay, peace !
Thwart not my soul, of which to judge the love,
Thou must partaker of its essence be.
Take her !—Take fortune, honours, fame! They're
things
We hunt for ;—they're the eager chace, that so
Inspirts us,—despite its length, its stops,
Its perils, its escapes, and accidents,—
We keep it up with cheer ! and what are these
To this excelling maid ?—I would not *take*—
For that were to suppose a thing obtain'd,
Untoil'd, and unadventur'd for—I'd win her !

HOSTESS.

And worthy were to win ! How say you, Bess ?
Wilt thou to church be led by him ? Nor no,
Nor yes ? I marvel what a maid would say,
Who, when she's asked to church, doth hang her head !
Is't no ?—No, Bess ?—An angel to a crown
Tis no ! but no to no, that answers no.

Sweet Bess, had'st e'er thy fortune read to thee?
Show me thy hand. How white a thing it is!
What's here? Here's line, and line, and ne'er a cross—
A lucky hand! Look! Saw you e'er the like?
Methinks this hand betoken should, a maid
Not like to wed—for wedlock's still, you know,
The cross of womankind. She'll never wed!
You think she will, I see, and doubt my skill?
Then try your own, and read the hand yourself.

WILFORD.

This precious hand,—had I the skill to read,
Great as the will, and fortune it foretold,
Past what could e'er be mine,—I'd wish it well!
Though what its hope did build, of mine were wreck!
If adverse was its promise!—lucklessness
Through life, unpurchas'd foes, unstable friends,
Afflictions, beggary, in all—but love—
And I the one to keep thee rich in that!—
'Fore hands with fortune's pledges fair o'erwrit,
I'd covet thine, and for that only gift,
Compound for all beside! Did'st press my hand?
Thou did'st!—Thou did'st!—Deny it not, while stands
That glowing witness on thy modest cheek,
To back my tongue? I'faith, love's day doth come,
And that's the dawn, or never yet did beam
His golden sun on earth! And I to be
Its harbinger to her! Come, let us seek
Thy parents. Rich enough are they for me,
Whose blessing leaves me not a wish to bless!

LORD THOMAS WILLOUGHBY (*entering with attendants*).

Tis she ! For once hath rumour spoken truth ! (*Aside*)
Base hind forbear—nor lock thy arms on one
Thy knee were much too grac'd to wait upon—
And straight resign to me my peerless bride ;
For know, whom thou esteem'st a beggar's child,
Is daughter to a baron of descent,
The highest in the land.

WILFORD.

A baron's child !
And bride to thee !

BESS.

Oh, no !—No baron's child !
My father is a wandering beggar-man !
I would not be a baron's child !—yea, child
Unto a king—and least of all be bride to him !

LORD THOMAS.

I'faith thou art a baron's child ;—I'faith
Thou art my bride ;—such gives thee out the tongue,
Whose word is law ; 'twere treason to dispute.

WILFORD.

What say'st thou, Bess ?

BESS.

I'm bride to none but thee !
Thou that would'st wed me, though a beggar's child,
Were I a baron's child, should'st wed me still !
Take mind for mind, and heart for heart from me !
I saw thee, and I lov'd thee !—Grows my tongue
Too bold ?—Forgive it for the bashfulness

That could not pay thy love with one poor word,
Until another did dispute with thee
What eye, and ear, and heart, and soul, and all
Bear witness is thine own!—where are thine arms?—
Or did'st thou mock to say I was their treasure?

(*WILFORD clasps her in his arms.*)

LORD THOMAS (*drawing his sword*).

Forbear, I say! thy life's in jeopardy!
Lo! the commands of her whose will behoves
The proudest not to question. (*Gives a paper.*)

WILFORD.

What, to thee!
Convicted here of violence,
Offered to her, thou now would'st make thy bride!
Not for the queen will I resign her to thee.
(*Drawing too.*)

LORD THOMAS.

You talk it mightily!

WILFORD.

I'll do it too.
Look you,—a man will let one take his life,
Ere he'll give up his purse, and that, perhaps,
Will hold a score of crowns. It hath been done
For less. Come, state the sum thou'dst set against her!
What's its amount? Come, name't. Could'st borrow it
From usury? Could'st find it in the mint?
In that which feeds the mint—the unwasting mine?
Could'st eke it out with diamonds, and the rest
Of all the brood of gems? Could'st fancy it?—

And shall I give her up, that have the right
To keep her? Never with my will! She's mine!
You see she is! You see her choice no less
Doth hold her here, than do the arms, my soul,
With force of thousand arms, doth lock upon her.
Advance an inch, thy life's not worth a straw!

HOSTESS.

A spark! A spark among a thousand! Take
His word, good sir. He's one that says and does!
The man for me I'd wed, were I a maid!

(Music without.)

LORD THOMAS.

Abide the cost of your rebellion, slave!
The Queen herself is here!

*[March. Procession as before: Queen, &c.
Queen dismounts.]*

QUEEN.

Ha, swords without their cases! What is this
Salutes mine eye surpassing all before,
Which it hath learn'd of nature's cunning fairness?
How! you that have the charge of him, lead forth
The Beggar of Bethnal Green.

BESS.

My parents!

ALBERT AND EMMA.

Bess!

QUEEN.

I knew it must be she. Hast found her, sir?
The star that look'd upon thy birth was fair—

For had she been indeed a beggar's child,
She yet had been thy bride. The truant ring
That did betray thee, still was faithful to thee :
This hour your nuptials shall be solemnised !

BELMONT.

Contain thyself ! her hand she'll never give.

WILFORD.

Does she—she may ! Refuses she, let him
That dares, attempt to take it !

HOSTESS.

Hold to that ;
I would were I a man !

QUEEN.

Yet,—ere we tax
The labour of the priest,—the parents' rank,
To me and to this lord alone divulg'd,
Befits it others know. That document
Which to our hand her father did confide ? (*to attendant.*)

(*Paper is brought, QUEEN reads.*)

Lord Woodville read and say, concerns thee aught
This history ? (*giving him the paper.*)

WOODVILLE.

It does ! If truth it speaks—
Which, doubt I not, the Beggar is my brother ;
A brother, that from me did, living, ne'er
Receive a brother's right, but hate for love ;
And yet whose death to love converted hate.

ALBERT.

Octavius !

WOODVILLE.

Albert !

ALBERT.

Brother !

WOODVILLE.

O forgive,

And with thy lands receive a brother back !

(they embrace.)

QUEEN.

My chaplain, ho !

Come tie the knot !

WILFORD.

I have a feeling now

Of what it is to die—the heavy pause,

Ere life goes out !

QUEEN.

What wait you for, sir priest ?

CHAPLAIN.

Her hand to give, the maiden doth refuse.

WILFORD.

She does ! She's true ! She's mine !

QUEEN.

Who's he that speaks ?

WOODVILLE.

A peasant, please your majesty !

LORD THOMAS.

A hind,

Your grace, who claims my bride !

WILFORD.

Thy bride ? She's mine !

Prize of my love, proud lord ! that coveted
Her love when she was low, as now she's high,
And won it !—won it !—won, what all thy gold,
Thy lands, thy honours, thy alliances,
Could never win for thee ! what, peasant as
I am, makes me the peer, that would not change
Condition with thee, wast thou twice as high.

HOSTESS.

A spark to win a woman !

LORD THOMAS.

Villain, hence.

WILFORD.

Proud lord, I fling the foul term back at thee !
Nor call thee villain mere, but traitor foul !
Who knew'st thy mistress was a virgin queen,
Yet strov'st to rob a virgin of her pride,
By villain force ! Ha ! do I make thee blench ?
Cower'st thou before me, peasant though I am ?
Has not the blood of all thy noble line,
The power to hearten thee, and make thee stand
Erect in presence of the nameless brow
That's bent upon thee with an honest scowl ?
Command'st me hence ?—Hence, rather thou ! and learn
Whose merits do behind their titles lag
Were better go undubb'd,—whilst lowest hind,
That's lord of noble deed, is lord enough.

QUEEN.

Secure that hind who dares to brave a lord.

BESS.

O great and royal mistress ! rate him not,

By what he seems. If nature marketh blood,
Then is the peasant of condition fair,
As any in your court. If to be high—
If to be truly gentle—be to shine
In valiant bearing, generosity,
Love, which the eye of fortune follows not
For guidance where to smile,—a noble and
The noblest noble should the peasant be !
O sovereign gracious, that art mistress of
A woman's costliest heart, look down on mine,
Which through mine eyes doth now look up to thee !
And let me not for bankrupt pass in love,
Disinterestedness, and constancy,
With all the means and all the will to pay.
Give him the baron's daughter, who would take
The beggar's child to wife !

QUEEN.

It must not be.

ALBERT.

O most gracious queen, a picture wears my child,
The likeness of her father ta'en in his youth ;
Command her show it you.

QUEEN.

That picture, girl ! (BESS gives the Picture.)

Feature for feature 'tis the peasant's own :—
A light breaks on me—my Lord Woodville,
Where is that truant son of thine, we wont
In sport to dub our hero of romance ?

LORD WOODVILLE.

Your grace, an age it is since I have seen him.

QUEEN.

Enough ! a pretty masque it is they play !
I'll try the mettle of her constancy. (to BESS.)
Give me this bauble, and that other one
Thou wearest in thy heart, throw far from it ;
For, by our title to the crown we wear,
We vow no peasant e'er shall call thee wife !

BESS.

Recal, recal the vow !

QUEEN.

Recal thy heart,
If thou hast given it him.

BESS.

I cannot do't.

QUEEN.

No ?

BESS.

No ! He is its owner—master—lord !
Yes, I avow it, peasant though he is,
I could not take it from him, if I would !
I would not were he less, if less could be !
No, not to give it to the proudest he
That glitters in your court !

ALBERT.

Oh thwart her not,
Most gracious mistress,—from adversity
I've learned !—instruction makes me venerate
Deeds more than circumstance. His deeds approve
That he doth love my child—her heart is his.

I would not from her heart her hand disjoin,
For gain of wealth or state !

QUEEN.

He dies for this !
Nay, gasp not, maid. 'Tis but the peasant dies,
To give thee in a baron's noble heir,
The lover whom thy constancy hath won !
Young lord,—thou see'st how fortune, to revenge
The wrong thou would'st have done this noble maid,
When thou esteemed'st her of low degree,
Now that she proves fit partner for thy bed,
Consigns her to another's worthier arms.

(to LORD THOMAS.)

We pardon thee thy trespasses, atoned
By loss of sight, and long privations borne.

(to ALBERT.)

Lord Woodville, join thy niece to thine own son,
For there indeed he stands ; and greetings spare,
Until we see their nuptials solemnised ;
Which we ourselves under our conduct take.
Pageant and masque shall grace their wedding day,
And poets vie while they rehearse the tale
Of Bess, the beggar's maid of Bethnal Green.

THE END.









1. The first part of the document is a list of names and addresses of the members of the committee.



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